

**PUBLIC ENEMY
WARNS WCW:**

THE WRESTLER



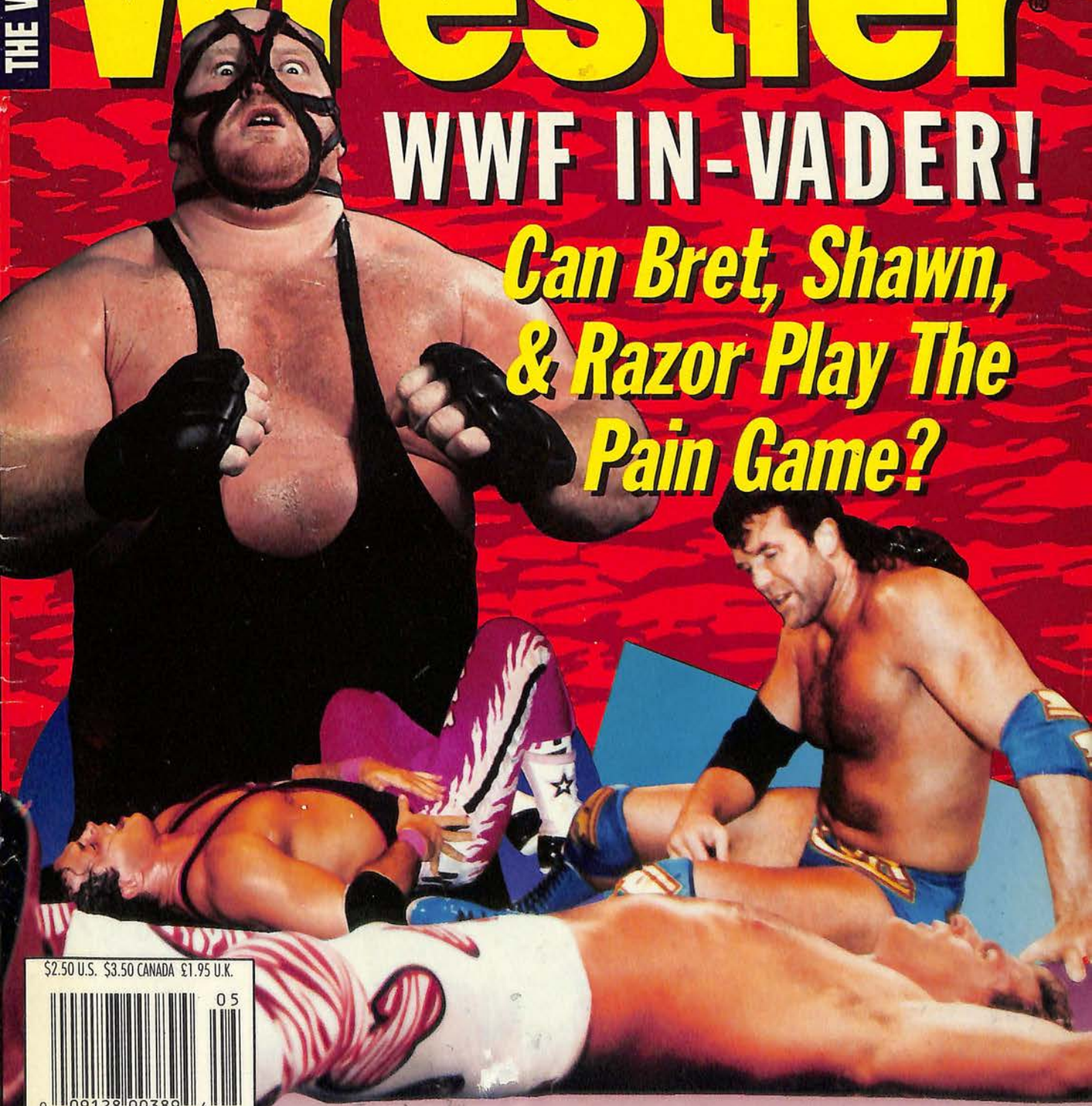
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May 1996

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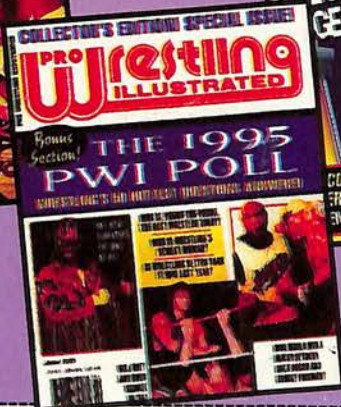
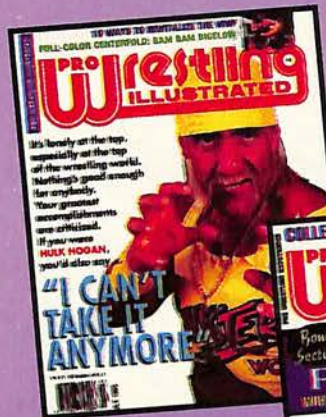
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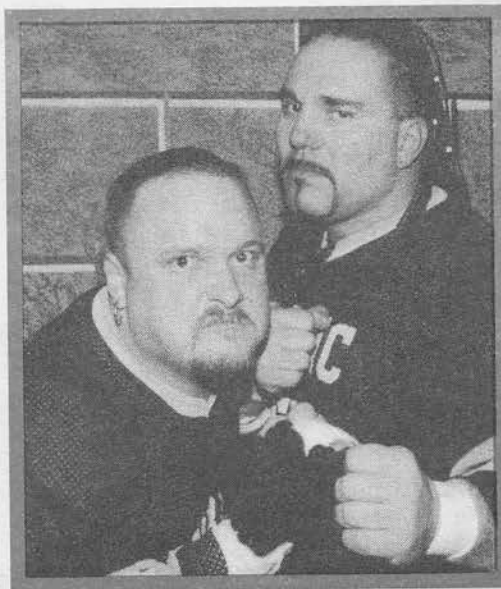
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THE Wrestler

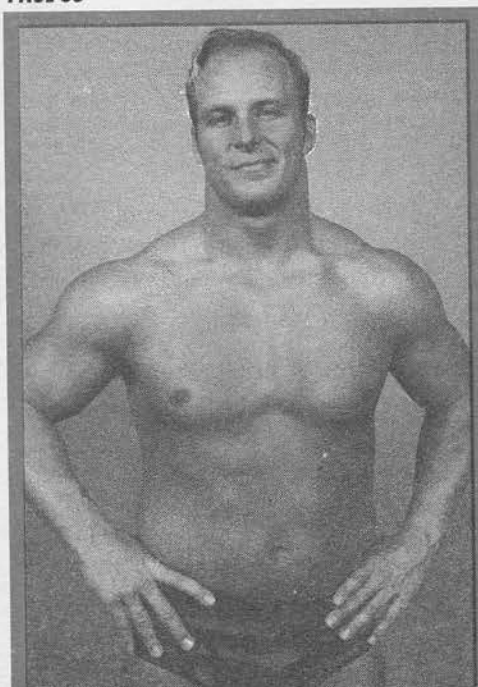
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LETTERS

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TV TIME?

With so many WWF matches on TV these days, you would think someone at the WWF would come up with the idea of instituting a TV title. Wrestlers such as Bob "Spark Plugg" Holly, Hunter Hearst Helmsley, and others who might not be quite ready to contend for the World heavyweight and Intercontinental titles could really benefit by having a third singles belt to shoot for. And it would make for more interesting programming if such a title was defended on TV each week. As WWF president, Gorilla Monsoon

may have made some questionable rulings in the past, but if he decided to add a new championship, he could make people forget about some of his mistakes.

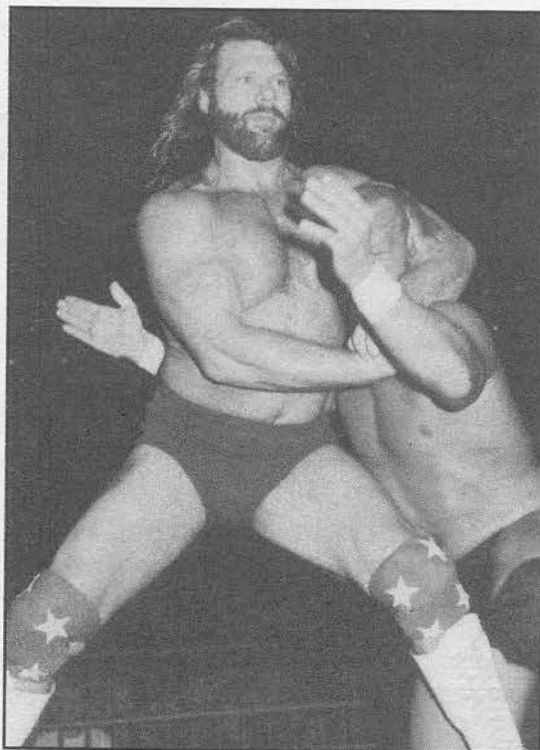
MATT WITTMAN
Waterloo, IL

THOSE UGLY WWF-WCW WARS

Look at the pot calling the kettle black! WCW's Eric Bischoff must really enjoy making himself look foolish. He is always referring to WCW as the promotion "where the big boys play." Well, Eric, I have news for you: The big men are in the WWF! Bischoff said on a broadcast of *WCW Monday Nitro* that the WWF World champion (referring to Diesel) was only a mid-card contender when he was in WCW (as Vinnie Vegas).

This may be true, but I do recall a certain 2 x 4-carrying U.S. champion who spent about seven years in the WWF without winning a single championship. Didn't he win the U.S. title after about three months in WCW? I also

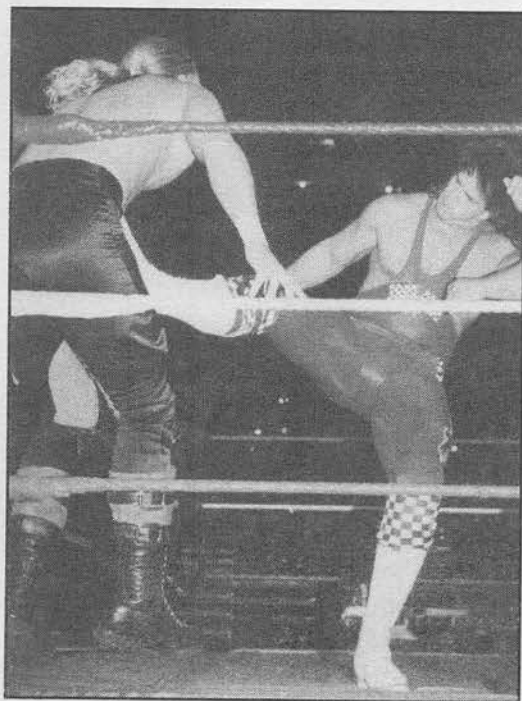
recall a mid-card con-



It took Hacksaw Duggan a few months to win the WCW U.S. title, whereas he never won a title in all his years in the WWF. Reader Philip Gasco says that's proof that WCW isn't better than the WWF.

tender in the WWF who carried a nightstick, then transformed himself into an "angel" in WCW and cleanly pinned Sting at a pay-per-view. Then there is Lex Luger. Nah, that's too easy. Bischoff should concentrate on his own federation instead of stealing other people's ideas and degrading people. I know the WWF's "Billionaire Ted's 'Rasslin' War Room" skits are a bit corny, but WCW deserves everything the WWF dishes out!

PHILIP GASCO
Pacoima, CA



Hunter Hearst Helmsley and Bob "Spark Plugg" Holly are two of the wrestlers who would benefit if the WWF instituted a TV title, according to reader Matt Wittman.

When Madusa (Alundra Blayze) dumped the WWF World Women's belt in a trash can on a recent edition of *WCW Monday Nitro*, it all seemed professional enough to me. Big stars change teams and federations all the time in sports today. But Vince McMahon's response to all the criticism WCW has leveled at the WWF wasn't. Putting down Hulk Hogan, Randy Savage, and others as over-the-hill stars was a bit of a low blow, even it was somewhat amusing. Still, it was typical Vince—childish.

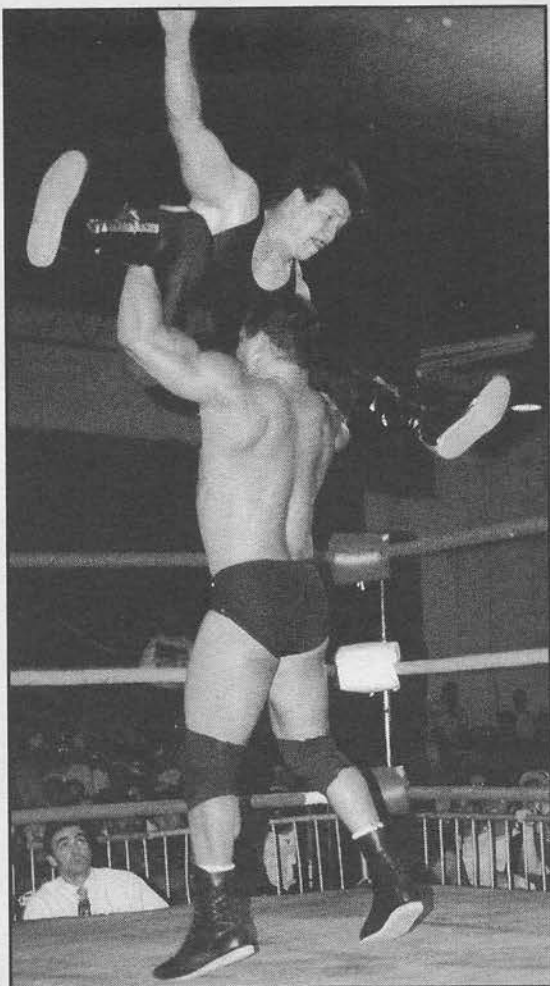
I continue to enjoy ECW much more than the "Big Two." Joey Styles is great as a commentator, and I love watching The Sandman, 911, Paul E. Dangerously, and all the rest. ECW takes the talent it has, makes the most of it, and always puts on great cards. The people who run ECW couldn't care less about what the WWF or WCW are up to. The "Big Two" should learn something from ECW.

CRAIG McLEAN
Junction City, KS

EDDY'S READY

I'm really sick of listening to Randy Savage, Ric Flair, Hulk Hogan, Lex Luger, and Sting arguing amongst themselves. Every week on *WCW Monday Nitro*, it seems like at least one of those guys moans about how he deserves a shot at the World title and someone else doesn't. I think all these guys have had enough shots at the World title.

It's time WCW started letting some of the other stars get title



Eddy Guerrero attempts to fight his way out of a Dean Malenko power bomb. Reader Jesse Rayes believes Guerrero has earned a shot at the WCW World title.

shots. The one man who I really think deserves one is Eddy Guerrero. It's true that he hasn't won every one of his WCW matches, but he gives his all every night and always puts himself in position to win. I think Guerrero could make Savage or Hogan look foolish in the ring, and it wouldn't surprise me if they were afraid of wrestling him. But sooner or later, WCW is going to have to start spotlighting some of these younger stars. Hogan, Savage, and Flair can't wrestle forever. Guerrero, on the other hand, could remain a superstar well into the next century.

JESSE RAYES
Salisbury, MD

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THE Wrestler

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WHAT'S

HAPPENING

By Bill Apter

RANDY SAVAGE BECAME WCW World champion for a second time on January 22 when he pinned **Ric Flair** during a live broadcast of *WCW Monday Nitro*. The pin took place just seconds after **Arn Anderson** accidentally hit Flair with brass knuckles. Immediately after the match, **Hulk Hogan** entered the ring and demanded a title shot from the "Macho Man," but Savage told his good friend that he must work his

way up the ladder of contention.

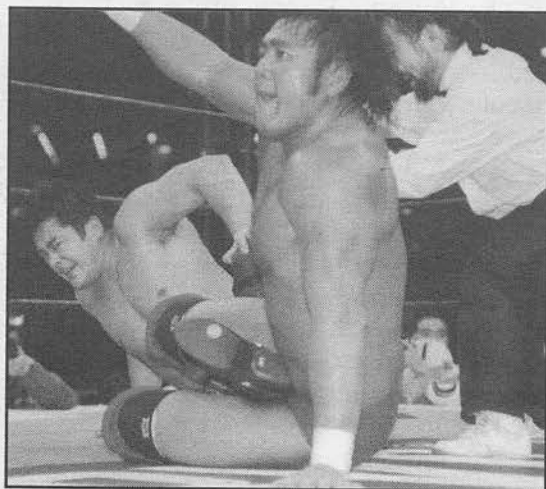
Later on the card, Hogan defeated U.S. heavyweight champion **One Man Gang** in a non-title match. You can bet Hogan will get his World title match soon; I've heard WCW match-makers are already busy drawing up contracts.

Shawn Michaels won

the 1996 Royal Rumble by superkicking him best friend, **Diesel**, out of the ring. With the win, Michaels has guaranteed himself a shot at the WWF World title at *WrestleMania XII*. But a few questions concerning the Rumble still must be addressed:

Q: Where was Sabu? He was scheduled to be in the Rumble.

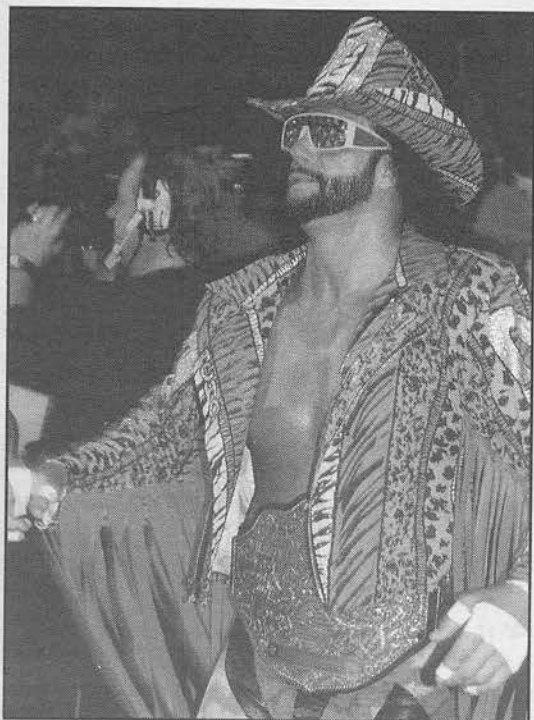
A: Sabu's ECW manager, **Paul E. Dangerously**, pulled him out just days before the event. "I must have been crazy to agree to let him go there in the first place!" Dangerously spat. "Having heard all the negative—but very true—statements ECW wrestlers have



Nobuhiko Takada eventually was successful in his effort to reverse **The Great Muta's** figure-four leglock during their January 4 match. He also succeeded in winning Muta's IWGP heavyweight title.

made about the WWF recently, I could see where some WWF honcho would put a bounty on his head and the next thing you know, 10 wrestlers would be jumping on his back trying to kill him. It wouldn't be worth it."

Q: WWF President **Gorilla Monsoon** reversed the decision of a **Hunter Hearst Helmsley-Duke Droese** match after he viewed a videotape replay and noticed that Helmsley had used brass knuckles to get the victory. Why then, didn't Monsoon return the Intercontinental belt to **Razor Ramon** after he lost to **Goldust**? If he viewed the videotape of that match, he would have seen that Goldust wouldn't have won if **The Kid** hadn't interfered on his behalf.



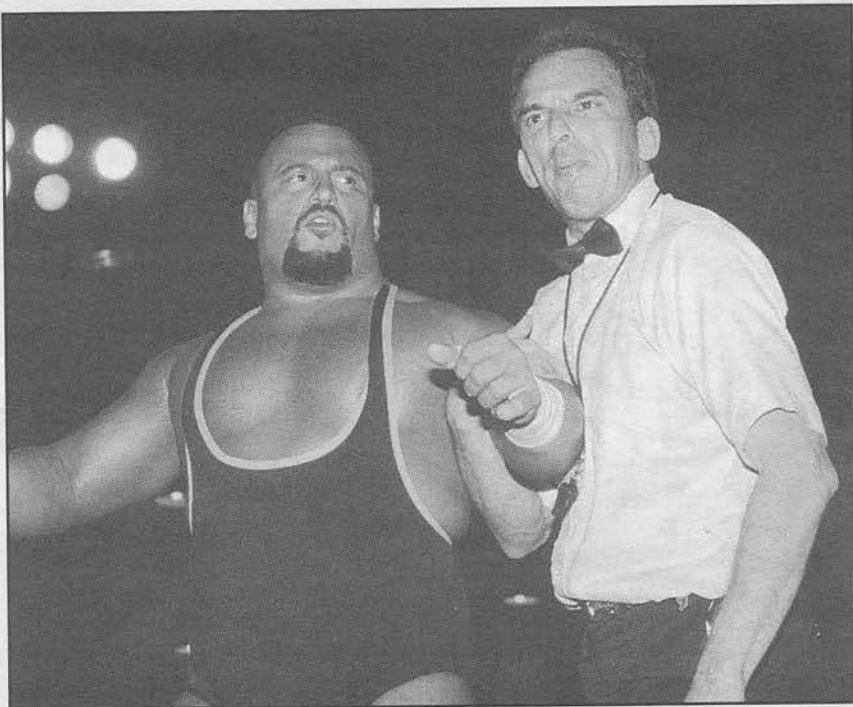
He has the WCW World title belt around his waist again! Randy Savage became a two-time WCW champ in January when he pinned Ric Flair. Now his good buddy Hulk Hogan is looking for his shot at the gold.

A: People in the WWF front office were very evasive about this one, but one spokesman told us their official line is that "the matter is still under investigation." Come on, guys! This is ridiculous. We're talking about a title change that never should have taken place. Monsoon has to be consistent in his rulings if he wants to have credibility as WWF president. Give me a break!

Tommy Rich is the new USWA Southern heavyweight champion. He beat **Jerry Lawler** for the belt just three days after Lawler beat **Tex Slazenger** ... **The Rock 'n' Roll Express** is back in Memphis, feuding with USWA tag team champions **PG-13** ... **The Great Muta's** IWGP heavyweight title reign came to an abrupt halt on January 4, as he was beaten by **Nobuhiko Takada** ... **The Rockin' Rebel** and **Glen Osbourne** have had several bloody matches recently, and both have ended up as finalists in the tournament for the vacant Liberty All-Star heavyweight belt ... **2 Cold Scorpio** regained the ECW TV title on January 5; he beat **Mikey Whipwreck** after **Raven** interfered.

I cannot believe what has happened to my old friend **Bill Alfonso**. When I first met Bill in the late-1970s, he was just learning how to be a referee. We used to travel together all the time and spend hours discussing the sport and how important integrity was if you wanted to be a successful official. I saw how much pride he took in enforcing the rules. Years later, he won praise as one of the NWA's finest referees, and he deserved it. Now Bill Alfonso in ECW, acting like a raving lunatic while managing the rulebreaking **Taz**! What the heck happened to him?

I recently cornered him after an ECW card, and he just began yelling at me. "Apter, you idiot," he said. "I make my own rules. All the



This definitely is one of the oddest alliances in wrestling today: Taz and former referee Bill Alfonso. Once a highly respected official, Alfonso is now a rulebreaking manager in ECW.

years I wasted trying to be a good soul all led up to this, the realization that this sport bends over backward to help those who break the rules. I'm Bill Alfonso! Get out of my face, you bald-headed geek!" Obviously, the Bill Alfonso I knew is dead. This just can't be the same guy.

My pick for the ugliest young wrestler in the world has to be **The Blue Meanie**, who's a friend of Raven and **Stevie Richards** in ECW. This guy has a body odor that you just wouldn't believe. No one will get near him in the dressing room! He'd probably make a

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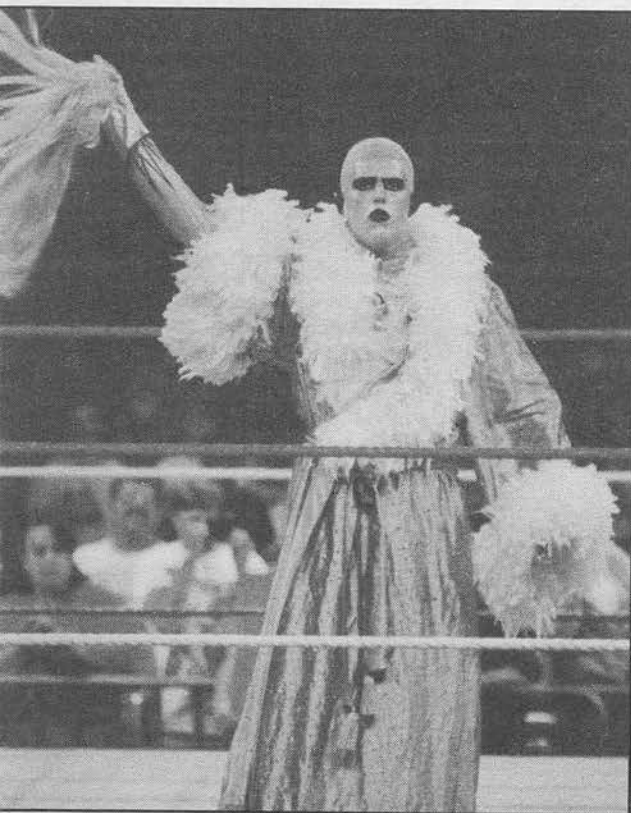
STEVE ANDERSON'S VIEW



NO HOLDS BARRED

with David Rosenbaum

"THE NACHO MAN"? "The Huckster"? "Billionaire Ted"? "Scheme Gene"? Have the powers-that-be at the WWF seriously lost their minds, or are they merely feeling the heat?



Do the actions of Goldust constitute "family entertainment"? Vince McMahon apparently thinks it does. Either that or he has stopped trying to attract children and families to WWF events.

After spending decades ignoring all competition and arrogantly placing itself above all other federations—in fact, even acting as if it was the only federation in the world—the WWF has finally decid-

ed to take the low road. And it doesn't get any lower than this: "The Huckster" vs. "The Nacho Man" with "Billionaire Ted" as special guest referee in a comedy showcase match. Vince McMahon's idea of humor.

At WrestleMania XII?

That's right, the WWF has taken its sophomoric battle of words and pictures with WCW and turned it into a so-called "main event" match at its biggest and most important pay-per-view event of the year.

At this point, WCW officials and promoters must be shaking in their shoes ... from laughter.

Need further evidence that the WWF has gone crazy and will do anything to get attention? Just read on. There's plenty.

For example, at the 1996 Royal Rumble alone:

Goldust, a.k.a. Dustin Rhodes, a crude and insulting takeoff on cross-dressers and homosexuals, celebrated his Intercontinental title victory over Razor Ramon by French-kissing his female accompaniment for all the world to see.

Family entertainment?

Shawn Michaels celebrated his Royal Rumble victory by pulling down his pants (almost too far) right in front of the crowd and TV audience.

And Diesel made an obscene gesture toward The Undertaker in full view of the camera and the crowd, which was loaded with youngsters.

There was a time when the WWF cared about its image and tried to cater to children and families. After watching this pay-per-view, I wouldn't be surprised if a lot of parents decided they had spent their last \$29.95 on the WWF.

Too bad, because the quality of the wrestling was generally out-

(Continued on page 54)

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BY
ANDY
RODRIGUEZ

BURNED

YOU LOOK AT the two of them and wonder how they kill time on the road. For example, when Jerry Lawler and Vince McMahon arrive in a new city for, say, a *WWF Monday Night Raw* broadcast, or maybe a pay-per-view, do they spend time together? Or is what we hear at the beginning of one broadcast the continuation of a conversation that ended the second the previous broadcast ended?

"Vince McMahon is a busy man, and he has more things to do than just worry about the broadcast," said a member of the WWF's road crew. "But, yes, I have seen them out together and in most cases, they're very cordial toward each other. Except, of course, when they're talking about wrestling."

There's no rule that says a stage duo has to like each other away from the spotlight. Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis feuded. For every Burns and Allen that got married, there's a Simon and Garfunkel who didn't get along. In broadcasting, however, the interaction that takes place between a blow-by-blow man and his color analyst is so personal—and the conversation has to flow so freely—that it's hard to imagine them not being friends.

John Madden and Pat Summerall give the impression that when the game is over, the first words out of their mouths are, "Where shall we go for dinner?" The idea of McMahon and Lawler having lunch together just doesn't fit.

"Lunch with McMahon?" Lawler said, repeating the question. "Yeah, I'll have lunch with McMahon whenever he wants, as long as he picks up the check. We've had dinner together, but I've got other things to do and so does he. If you're asking if he's the first person I call when I feel like going down to the hotel bar for a drink, the answer is no. I'll call Isaac Yankem or Owen Hart before I call McMahon."

The problem, as one WWF insider pointed out, is that Lawler and McMahon hardly ever agree about what's best for the federation. Adversity and diversity is their appeal; if Lawler and McMahon start liking each other too much, then they're no longer a duo people will want to listen to. Lawler and McMahon are fun because they never agree. Sometimes their distaste for each other is obvious.

"But they work together, and there has to be some communication," said a WWF insider. "They'll go over their plans for an upcoming broadcast, or maybe they'll just pick each other's brains about what they want to talk about. I have noticed, however, that they purposely go out of their way to avoid talking about subjects that they both agree upon."

Such as? It's hard to think of any subject Lawler and McMahon agree upon.

"That's true," the insider said. "I can't think of anything off the top of my head, but there have been times."

When pressed, Lawler and McMahon would probably admit to some admiration for each other. McMahon thinks it's pretty impressive that Lawler works as a WWF broadcaster and still has time to contend for the major USWA titles, and Lawler thinks it's impressive that McMahon has kept the WWF running so smoothly for so long.

The McMahon-Lawler tandem figures to last a long time because both men enjoy what they're doing. McMahon has been behind the WWF microphone since the 1970s, and Lawler has found a second career as a commentator. When his wrestling days are over, he plans on spending even more time in broadcasting.

"It's a good life ... an easy life," he said. "I get to sit around and criticize everyone. No wonder McMahon's been doing it for so long!"

They have the kind of relationship that can stand a few friendly pokes here and there. In the world of wrestling, there might not be a more unlikely tag team. □



McMahon & Lawler

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IWA TAPE #1 (8/20/95) - KAWASAKI DREAM "KING OF DEATH" MATCH TOURNAMENT

This is a very violent, bloody, graphic, and, at times, sick tape. Tons of blood and brawls over 2 hours. 1. Tiger Jeet Singh vs. Mr. Gannosuke (BARBED WIRE BARRICADE MATCH); 2. Terry Funk vs. Leatherface (BARBED WIRE BARRICADE MATCH); 3. Cactus Jack vs. Terry Gordy (BARBED WIRE, BASEBALL BAT, THUMB TACK MATCH). Cactus gets slammed into thumbtacks - sick and bloody; 4. Nakamaki vs. Ono (BARBED WIRE, BASEBALL BAT, THUMB TACK MATCH). Bloodbath and Ono gets thumbtacks in his head must be seen; 5. Terry Funk vs. Tiger Jeet Singh (GLASS, BARBED WIRE, BARRICADE MATCH); 6. Cactus Jack vs. Nakamaki (BED OF NAILS MATCH). Sick and bloody; 7. Headhunters vs. Silver King - Texano; 8. Dan Severn vs. Tarzen GoTo (NWA Title Match); 9. Terry Funk vs. Cactus Jack (NO ROPE, ELECTRIFIED BARBED WIRE BARRICADE EXPLOSION MATCH); and more matches. This show has matches where people get thumbtacks stuck in their head, wrestlers receive bad burns and a combined stitch count of over 500 !!!!!!!!!

IWA TAPE #2 (3/7/95) IWA THUMB-TACK DEATH MATCH TAPE

Bloody, bloody, bloody. 1. Crypt Keeper vs. Yamada; 2. Silver King+Texano vs. Okano+Tajiri; 3. Headhunters vs. Kendo Nagasaki+Iceman (BARBED WIRE THUMB-TACK DEATH MATCH); 4. Cactus Jack+Leatherface vs. Nakamaki+Ono (NO ROPE BARBED WIRE THUMB TACK DEATH MATCH - THIS IS THE 1ST THUMB TACK MATCH EVER!) Leatherface uses a chainsaw - bloody!!!! Plus more matches from IWA.

IWA TAPE #3 (4/3/95) IWA BRICK DEATH MATCH

Wild brawls with blood. 1. Headhunters vs. Terry Funk+Ono (HEADHUNTERS TURN ON EACH OTHER); 2. Abdullah the Nakamaki+Leatherface vs. Cactus Jack+Cryptkeeper (NO ROPE, BARBED WIRE WITH PILES OF BRICKS WRAPPED IN BARBED WIRE SURROUNDING THE RING MATCH). Bloody; 3. Iceman+Matsuda vs. Taue+Yamada; 4. Sugawara vs. Togai; 5. Okano vs. Tajiri.

IWA TAPE #4 (5/1/95) HEADHUNTERS BROTHERS GLASS DEATH MATCH

1. Headhunter A vs. Headhunter B (GLASS AROUND THE RING MATCH). They stab each other with the glass, bloody; 2. Nakamaki vs. Crypt Keeper (BARBED WIRE LADDER MATCH) FMW+War Wrestlers interfere; 3. Leatherface vs. Ono; 4. Taue vs. Togai; 5. Boragail vs. Yamada; 6. 6-Man with Silver King+Texano+Superastro+Araya Plus More.

IWA TAPE #5 (11/17/94) TEXAS BRONCO NEW COMING

Bloody Flesh!!!!!!!!!!!!!! 1. Terry Funk vs. Leatherface (STEEL CAGE DEATH MATCH); 2. Headhunters vs. Dick Slater+Araya; 3. Shouji Nakamaki vs. Hiroshi Ono (BARBED WIRE CHAIN MATCH); 4. Silver King+El Texano vs. Miquel Perez, Jr.+Super Astro; 5. Super Astro vs. Okano.



IWA TAPE #6 (11/13/94) FIRE ON EARTH

Hot Fire Match!!!!!!!!!! 1. Terry Funk+Hiroshi Ono vs. Nakamaki+Araya (BARBED WIRE FIRE MATCH); 2. Miquel Perez vs. Leatherface (BARBED

WIRE BASEBALL BAT MATCH); 3. Headhunters vs. Silver King+El Texano; 4. Dick Slater vs. Johnny Gomez; 5. Super Astro vs. Okano.

IWA TAPE #7 (10/16/94) IWA GRAVEYARD

Crazy Matches!!!!!! 1. Headhunters vs. Nakamaki+Ono (THE ORIGINAL GLASS DEATH MATCH); 2. Brian Christopher +Dark Patriot vs. Dick Slater+Araya; 3. Leatherface vs. Crash the Terminator (BARBED WIRE BASEBALL MATCH); 4. Gran Apache vs. Okano; 5. Gran Apache vs. Tajiri.



IWA TAPE #8 (12/13/94) HELL DEATH MATCH

Sick and Wild!!!! 1. Nakamaki+Ono vs. Leatherface+Original Leatherface (SPIKE NAIL HELL MATCH); 2. Kendo Nagasaki vs. Araya; 3. Johnny Gomez vs. Dick Murdoch; 4. Miquel Perez, Jr.+Jiraiya vs. Okano+Ajuila Negra; 5. Tajiri vs. Taue.

IWA TAPE #9 (1/8/95) DUEL OF THE WILDS

Bloody. 1. Terry Funk vs. Cactus Jack (NO ROPE, BARBED WIRE DEATH MATCH); 2. Araya vs. Tracy Smothers; 3. Nakamaki+Ono vs. Texas Hangmen (BARBED WIRE, BASEBALL BAT, BUNK-HOUSE MATCH); 4. Jiraiya vs. Tajiri; 5. Ajuila Negra vs. Taue.

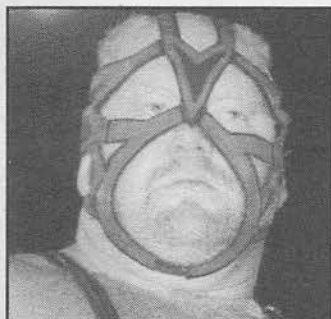
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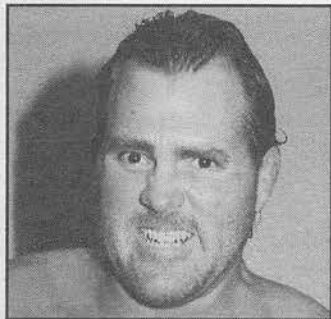
Thumbs Up



Each Issue, *THE WRESTLER* will praise the noteworthy and damn those who violate the honor of wrestling. The praiseworthy receive a Thumbs Up, the disgraceful are marked with a Thumbs Down. Here is this month's roll of honor and shame.



Thumbs Up to Big Van Vader. The three-time former WCW World champion's return is good for wrestling, if not necessarily good for his beleaguered opponents. Vader is one of the most awesome competitors of this decade, and his absence for a few months left a large void in North American wrestling. Having been humbled by Hulk Hogan in WCW, Vader is now getting a fresh start in the WWF, and it's a virtual certainty that his power bomb will be put to fearsome use crippling opponents. Although we usually don't approve of his methods, we must admit that Vader makes wrestling more exciting.



Thumbs Up to Brutus Beefcake. It's true that actions speak louder than words. Much louder, in this case. When Beefcake, now known as Zodiac, stopped The Giant from doing further damage to Hulk Hogan after a Giant choke-slam on January 8, he may have shown that he wants to get out of the Dungeon of Doom and back on the "Hulkster's" good side. This act was far more meaningful than Beefcake's embarrassing plea for forgiveness last year. Sure it's going to be hard for Hogan to forgive and forget, but he must appreciate the sincerity of Beefcake's gesture. If not for Brutus/Zodiac, Hogan could have been seriously injured.

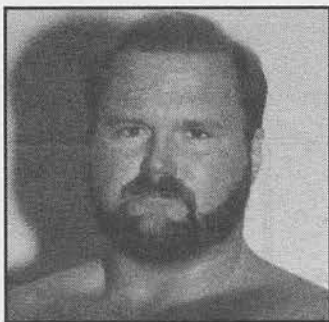


Thumbs Up to Antonio Inoki. Ric Flair, Sting, Lord Steven Regal, and now Big Van Vader. Now 52, the legendary Japanese wrestler pulled off another monumental upset on January 4 in Tokyo by defeating Vader by submission to an armlock. What an incredible series of feats for a man who is supposedly far past his prime. Vader is a three-time former WCW World champ. Flair is an 11-time world champion. Sting is a three-time former WCW World champ. How is it possible that at his age, Inoki is still beating the top wrestlers in the world? "Mental intensity," was his answer. Wow! We can only imagine what's going on in Inoki's brain.

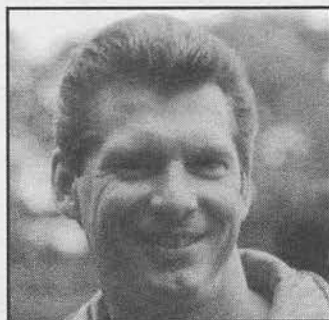


Thumbs Up to Jeff Jarrett. When Jesse James Armstrong interfered in his match against Brian Christopher recently, Jarrett beat the stuffing out of him. Great! He should have done that a long time ago, well before Armstrong cost "Double-J" the WWF Intercontinental title last July. We're hoping the old Jarrett has re-emerged—the man who was an outstanding all-around wrestler and liked to get things done on his own. It's time for WWF fans to see the kind of wrestler USWA fans have known all along, the Jarrett who belongs among the sport's elite. Pummeling Armstrong was a step in that direction.

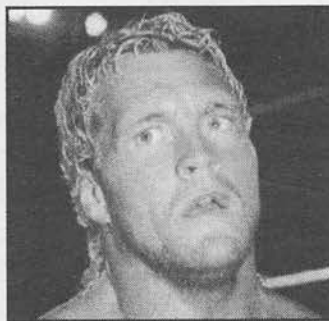
Thumbs Down



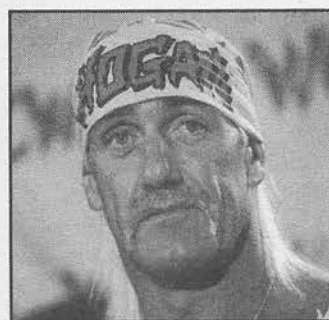
Thumbs Down to Arn Anderson. He's Flair-whipped. After months of showing an independent streak and asserting himself as a factor separate from and beyond Flair, Arn is now showing that the only thing he's willing to enforce is Flair's huge ego. "Double-A" lives for, dies for, eats, drinks, sleeps, and revolves his world around Flair. Having said the first priority of The Four Horsemen is to protect Flair and his WCW World title, Anderson sold himself short. When Flair won the belt from Randy Savage, Anderson interfered. When he defended the belt against Hulk Hogan, Anderson interfered. What the matter, Arn? Don't you have your own agenda?



Thumbs Down to Vince McMahon. The WWF head has shown that he's capable of getting down in the gutter with anyone and abandoning all his standards. For more than a decade, the WWF responded to criticism and potshots from WCW and other federations by not responding at all. By turning a deaf ear, the WWF showed admirable integrity. Well, forget about that. The WWF is now spending ample time on its broadcasts firing back at the now-strong WCW and is wasting our time with ridiculous skits and characters ("The Huckster," "The Nacho Man," "Scheme Gene," and "Billionaire Ted"). Who needs this?



Thumbs Down to Sid Vicious. We don't like to cut people down. We try to give wrestlers the benefit of the doubt. But when a man who has the tools of a "Psycho" Sid loses to a mid-card wrestler like Bob "Spark Plugg" Holly, it isn't easy to be kind. What is it exactly that's holding Sid back? Nobody has been able to come up with an answer to that yet. If anyone could, he'd undoubtedly make him a world champion—if Sid would just do everything he says. Perhaps that's the problem. The only person Sid pays any heed to is himself. And he keeps giving himself the wrong answers. Maybe he should start listening to his manager, Ted DiBiase.



Thumbs Down to Hulk Hogan. The "Hulkster" is an angry man these days. Angry that his friend Randy Savage is getting WCW World title matches ahead of him. And angry that Kevin Sullivan and his Dungeon of Doom keep terrorizing him. How does he handle the Savage situation? By berating his friend on national TV for being selfish. And how does he handle the Dungeon of Doom situation? By stooping to Sullivan's level. Case in point: When Meng was ready to use a foreign object on Hogan during a January 15 match, Hogan grabbed it, hit Meng with it, then slipped it into Meng's tights so the referee wouldn't see it. Some role model.

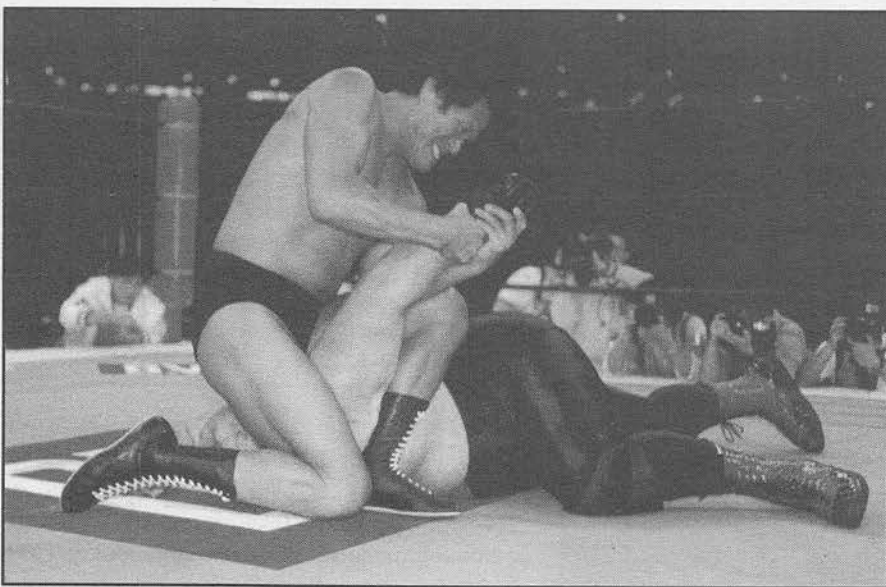
CORRESPONDENTS

REPORTS

Tokyo, Japan (Correspondent—Koichi Yoshizawa): It looked like a colossal mismatch. In one corner stood 450-pound three-time former WCW World champion Big Van Vader, one of the most intimidating wrestlers on the planet, while in the other stood 52-year-old Antonio Inoki. For a while, it was a mismatch.

Vader showed the legendary Inoki no respect. He pounded him relentlessly with clotheslines, kicks, and punches. It didn't take him long to open a gash under Inoki's eye. The most devastating move he used was a crunching German suplex, which folded Inoki up like an accordion. Inoki barely kicked out after a two-count just seconds later. Vader, however, wasn't through. He soon climbed to the top rope and executed a beautiful moonsault. Again, however, Inoki kicked out just before the count of three.

In the minutes that followed, Inoki mounted a comeback. He knocked Vader to the mat a few times and opened a large cut on Vader's face. Vader was unable to defend himself against the Inoki assault. After felling his opponent with a powerslam, Inoki locked on



Antonio Inoki found Big Van Vader's arm to be vulnerable during their match at the Tokyo Dome. The 52-year-old legend pulled off another upset by forcing Vader to submit to his armbreaker.

an armbreaker and got the win by submission.

In other bouts: Yuji Nagata, Tokimitsu Ishizawa, & Shinjiro Otani beat Kenichi Yamamoto, Kazushi Sakuraba, & Hiromitsu Kanehara ... Hiroyoshi Tenzan pinned Satoshi Kojima ... Jushin Liger pinned IWGP junior heavyweight champion Koji Kanemoto to win the belt ... Shiro Koshinaka beat Masa Chono ... Hiromichi Fuyuki beat Yoji Anjoh ... Kensuke Sasaki beat Hiroshi Hase ... Riki Choshu beat Masahito Kakihara

... Shinya Hashimoto defeated Kazuo Yamazaki ... Nobuhiko Takada pinned IWGP heavyweight champion The Great Muta to win the belt.

Uniondale, NY, (Correspondent—Blaine Pomeroy): Power vs. power was the theme of the match between "British Bulldog" Davey Boy Smith and Ahmed Johnson on this WWF card. Before the actual bout began, Smith and Johnson set

(Continued on page 56)

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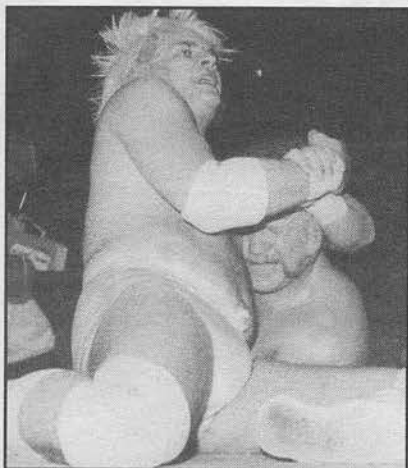
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YOU ASKED US

Here's the monthly feature that YOU get to write! It's your chance to have a top wrestler answer YOUR questions! Only the best questions will be answered, so put on your thinking caps and come up with some good ones! Address your questions—and who you would like to have answer them—to:

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The greatest day of Tommy Rich's career came in 1981, when he upset Harley Race for the NWA World title. He says people still give him a hard time about his short title reign, but it doesn't bother him.

Q: "I want to ask Tommy Rich some questions: Do you get upset with people who still knock you because you only reigned as NWA World champion for four days in 1981? Also, would you like a title shot against current NWA champion Dan Severn?"
—Jose Oscar Jimenez, New York, NY

A: "Oh, yeah, people still give me a hard time about my NWA title reign," said Rich. "And every single one of 'em is an idiot. They're the same kind of people who say the Buffalo Bills were losers because they lost so many Super Bowls. Well I *did*

win the big prize. To even get in position to wrestle for the NWA title, you have to be the best of the best. I fit that bill back in '81, and I still fit it today. Anyone who gives me a hard time is jealous. As for Dan Severn, sure, bring him on. The most overrated NWA champion of all-time. I don't care how many UFC competitions he won. He's never been in a real fight until he's been in the ring with Tommy Rich!"

Q: "This is a question for Harley Race: You know Big Van Vader as well as anyone. How do you think he'll do in the WWF?" —Chad Veaster, Anaheim, CA

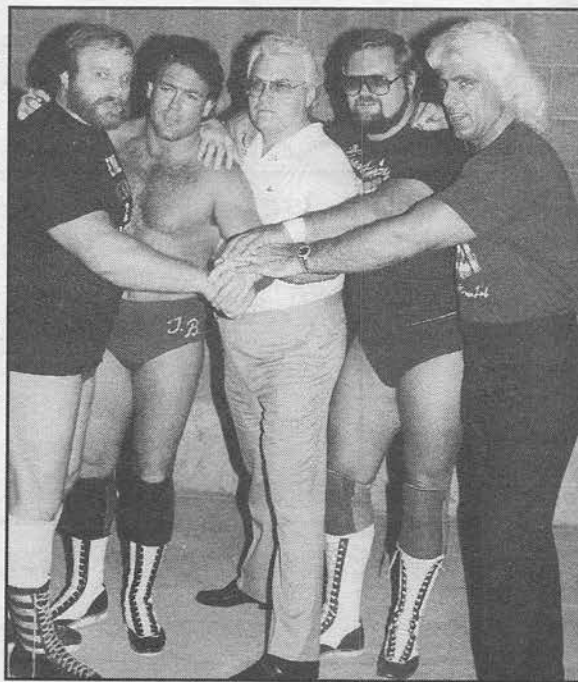
A: "Stupid question," answered Race. "Do you think he's going to get embarrassed by Barry Horowitz or Bob 'Spark Plugg' Holly? Vader is a like a half-monster/half-machine. He's programmed himself to destroy anything in his path as quickly as possible. But he's also as scary as any monster you'll see in any horror movie. When Shawn Michaels was having a hard time deciding whether he wanted to

retire or come back, Vader should have helped him make that decision. Just the fact that Vader was in the WWF should have been enough to convince him to stay out of the ring. I thought Vader was awesome when I managed him in WCW. But you saw what he did to Gorilla Monsoon. He could turn out to be even more dangerous in the WWF."

Q: "I have a question for Arn Anderson: You've been a member of every version of The Four Horsemen. Could you give me an honest assessment of which group of Horsemen you think was the best?" —Norm Taylor, Cedar Rapids, IA

A: "A good question from a fan ... that's unusual," said Anderson. "When me and Ric Flair first put the Horsemen together, those were some of the greatest days of my life. A lot of people didn't expect much from the Horsemen when me, Ric, Ole,

(Continued on page 58)



The first incarnation of The Four Horsemen—Ole Anderson, Tully Blanchard, manager J.J. Dillon, Arn Anderson, and Ric Flair—was probably Arn's favorite, but he likes the potential of the new Horsemen, too.

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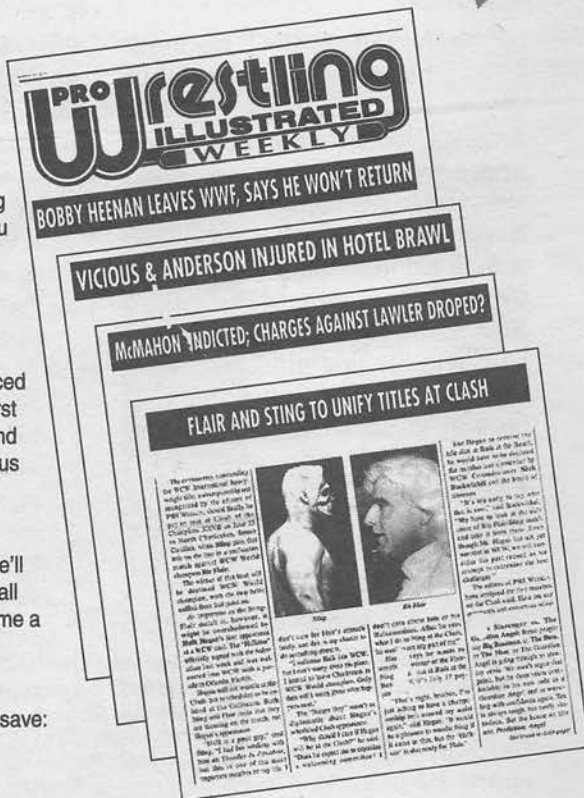
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INTRODUCING

ARMOND CECERE

By Dave Rosenbaum

ON THE NIGHT he made his pro wrestling debut, Armond Cecere, a.k.a. Kid America, looked over his shoulder and saw Tony Atlas standing in his corner. It was a thrill. Here he was, a kid from the little college town of Smithtown, New York, wrestling his first professional match and getting to do so with his childhood hero. *Pinch me*, Cecere thought.

But there have been other heroes in Cecere's life: wrestling heroes such as Killer Kowalski and Bruno Sammartino, football heroes, and other sports heroes. At 37, Cecere's debut didn't come late because it took so long for somebody to notice him. It came so late because he was so busy doing other things. The timing just wasn't right.

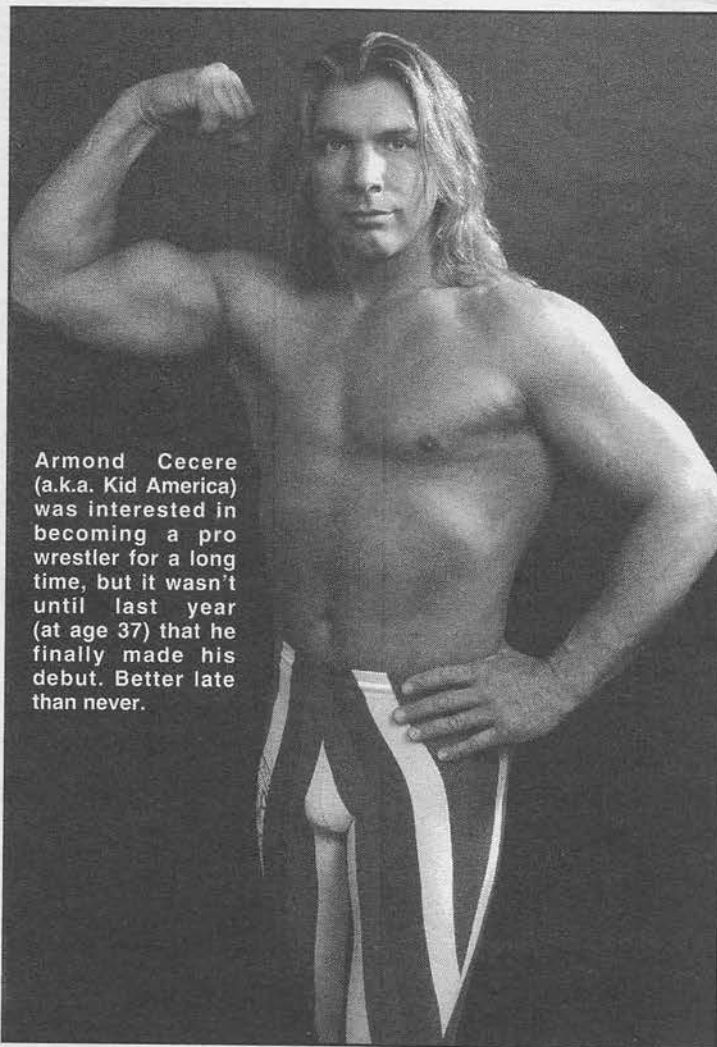
The time is now for the 6'1", 220-pound Cecere. "I've had a lot of people tell me that I'm starting too late,"

Cecere said, "and I know that this is an usual way to break into a sport. But you know what? At 23, I was concerned what other people said. At 37, I'm confident enough to make my own choices."

He evidently has a plan, even if it did take him 14 years to formulate it. Cecere believes that to be a successful wrestler in 1996, you must be multitalented. "If you ask me, it's not the big guys who brawl

or the little guys who do the aerial stuff that make this sport what it is," Cecere said. "It's the diversified guys, the big men who you wouldn't expect to have any agility, but they're right up there doing drop-kicks with anybody. Like Tony. He's always been somebody I admired greatly, not only for his dedication to keeping his body in prime shape, but because there's more to him than just strength."

There's a lot more to Cecere than just wrestling. He played college football at Northeastern University and went on to play semi-pro ball for the Long Island Jets. In 1981, at age 23, Cecere got a mini-break when he signed with the New York Jets and lasted through most of training camp before getting cut.



Armond Cecere (a.k.a. Kid America) was interested in becoming a pro wrestler for a long time, but it wasn't until last year (at age 37) that he finally made his debut. Better late than never.

He's known as Kid America, but Armond Cecere is no kid. He has been waiting a long time to become a wrestler, and wrestling has been waiting a long time for him

"It was a long shot," Cecere said. "Here I am, some guy out of Northeastern University, which isn't a football powerhouse by any stretch, and I'm lining up in training camp with these big-time college stars."

Meanwhile, wrestling was weaving a pattern in and out of his life. Also in 1981, Cecere saw Atlas wrestling WWF World champion Hulk Hogan at Madison Square Garden. The crowd's reaction to Atlas got Cecere thinking—I wouldn't mind them acting that way for me—but Atlas really impressed him when he pressed Hogan over his head and slammed him to the mat.

"I saw him and started thinking, *That's the kind of wrestler I'd want to be*," Cecere recalled. "I'm telling you, it was an inspiration just watching him."

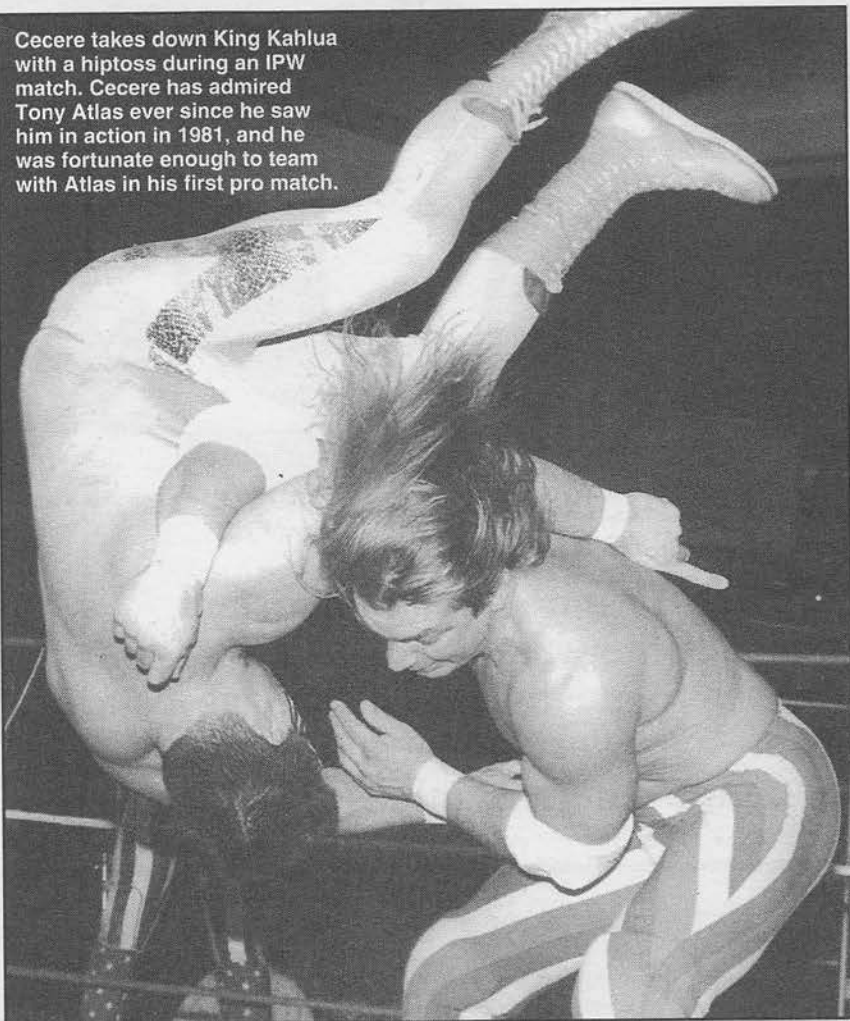
If you're thinking that night marked the big turning point in Cecere's life, think again. If you think the first thing he did the next morning was call wrestling schools, you're not on the right track. He wasn't ready yet. The following spring, Cecere sailed across the Atlantic with two pals. He spent many of his summers rock climbing and his winters alpine and ice climbing.

"I have a short attention span," Cecere admitted. "I need to be excited. Those things gave me a thrill, and they kept me diversified. At the time, I wasn't ready to settle down and just do one thing. I would've gone crazy."

Still, wrestling remained part of his life. He watched the sport, sparred with friends and aspiring pros in gyms, and tried to learn as much as he could about wrestling. Within a few years, the urge to do everything all the time started disappearing, and Cecere was left with one dream: to become a professional wrestler.

The time was finally right. Cecere was in the best shape of

Cecere takes down King Kahlua with a hiptoss during an IPW match. Cecere has admired Tony Atlas ever since he saw him in action in 1981, and he was fortunate enough to team with Atlas in his first pro match.



his life. He had money. His attitude was perfect. And his timing was right. He met Johnny Rodz through a friend who knew that Rodz operated a wrestling school. Rodz liked what he saw and told him that if he had respect for the sport and a desire to succeed, he could help him.

"You could see that he was on the right track mentally," Rodz said. "He wasn't some kid off the street who was just taking a shot. He was dedicated."

Rodz and Atlas trained Cecere for seven months and taught him to combine his strength with aerial maneuvers. Finally, Rodz scheduled Cecere's pro debut for December 27, 1995, on an International Pro Wrestling Card in Monticello, New York. When Cecere arrived, Atlas was waiting.

"I couldn't believe it!" Cecere said. "Here I was, making my pro debut with the man I fashioned myself after, and then we went out and won. It was a great night."

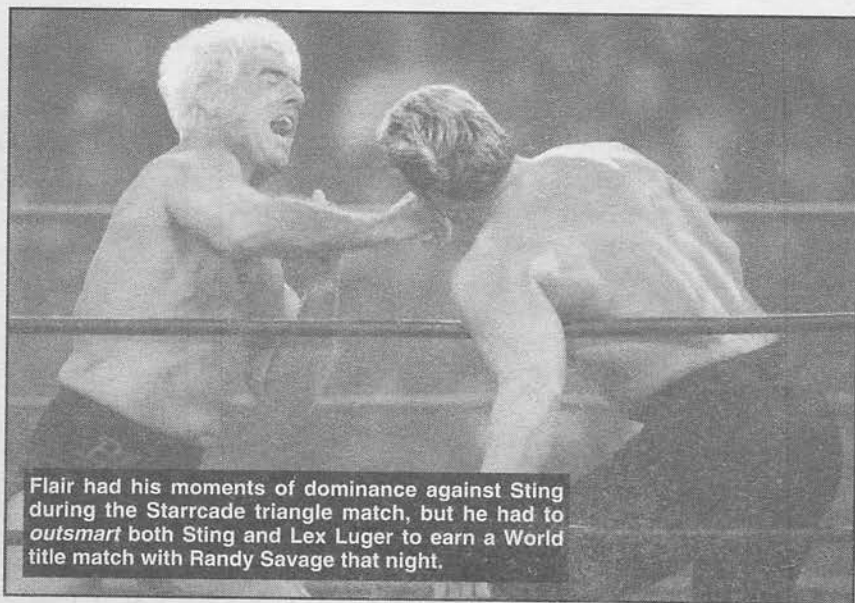
Cecere (as Kid America) and Atlas defeated Kodiak Bear and King Kahlua when Kid pinned Kodiak after a splash from the top rope. Since then, the reviews have been all raves.

"Kid America is the finest newcomer to get into wrestling since I made my debut," Atlas said. "He has it all and does it all. When I saw him that night, I knew this was a guy I wanted to work with."

Of course, Cecere's no kid. He's nearly 38 years old, an age at which most wrestlers should already be in their prime. Cecere is still learning. It's one of the things he does best. □

Q & A

Each month, *THE WRESTLER* will present a "Question and Answer" forum with an important figure in the wrestling world. It is your chance to meet wrestling's biggest stars as they answer the questions uppermost in fans' minds



Flair had his moments of dominance against Sting during the Starrcade triangle match, but he had to outsmart both Sting and Lex Luger to earn a World title match with Randy Savage that night.

Fans, wrestlers, and even you geniuses in the media. No one gave the "Nature Boy" a chance at Starrcade this year. But I showed all of you that the "Nature Boy" can still style and profile.

Q: Your activity up until Starrcade was not exactly the route a former or future world champion takes to the top. First of all, your alleged feud with Arn Anderson ...

A: Stop right there, my friend. We had all of you fooled. Old "Double-A" and myself set the plan in motion months back. We knew we could rope the "Stinger" in and reel the rest of you in, too. Not to mention taking attention away from Hogan.

Q: That you did. Second, you brought back the Horsemen yet again.

Q: Mr. Flair, all I can say to start this interview is congratulations on winning world title number 11.

A: Mr. Flair? You can dispense with the formalities. Just call me champ.

Q: All right, champ. Tell me this: Was the victory over Savage at Starrcade just as sweet as your win over Dusty Rhodes in 1981 for your first world title?

A: Sweeter. Much sweeter. Everyone counted me out.

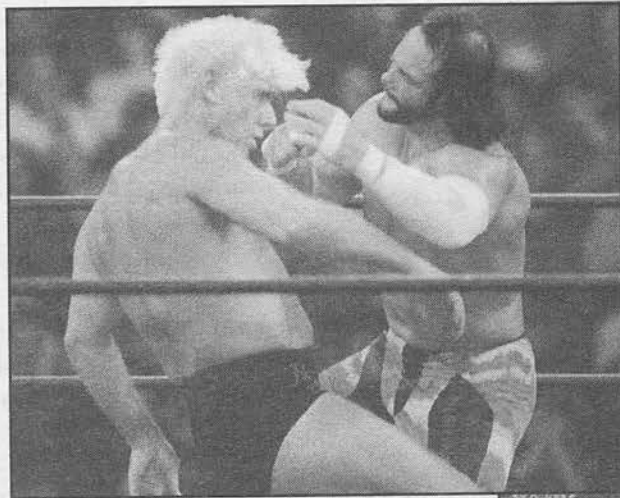
RIC FLAIR

RIC FLAIR HAS become the king of comebacks. He seriously injured his back in a plane crash in 1975. But he came back. Terry Funk once piledrived him onto a table and almost broke his neck. He came back. When he entered the WWF, many people thought he had no chance of succeeding there. He went through some tough times in the WWF, but he ultimately came back and won two World titles.

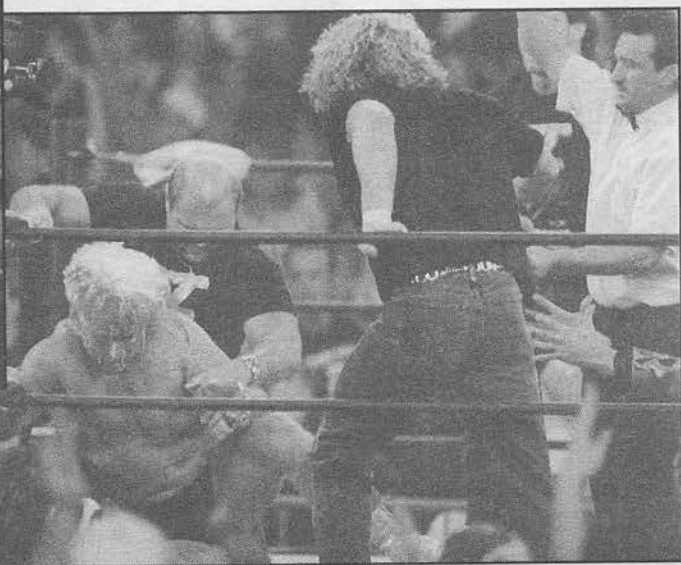
His latest comeback was a monumental one. Hulk Hogan retired Flair back at Halloween Havoc 1994. After a brief respite, though, Flair was reinstated. But shortly after he returned to the ring, he began losing ... a lot. Another successful comeback seemed unlikely ... perhaps impossible.

Fortunately for Flair, he thrives on his ability to make the impossible possible. He showed his tenacity and unwillingness to stay in the background when he pinned Randy Savage at Starrcade to win his 11th world title. On that night, Ric Flair showed us that he is not history. He makes history.

Although Flair has been hesitant to talk to media members who have called for his retirement, he was happy to sit down with Senior Writer Steve Anderson after a WCW TV taping. "He was in classic form," said Anderson. "As long as the talk revolved around him, he probably could have gone on all night."



The "Nature Boy" took a tremendous beating from Savage in that WCW title match (left). As it turned out, it was all worth it. Though his face was bloodied (below), Flair became World champion again.



A: Each version just gets better and better. This could be the best yet. With me holding another WCW World title, Arn's experience, and the youth of Pillman and Benoit, this unit will reign for a long time. Mark my words.

Q: Getting back to my original question, all this activity, plus

a feud with Sting while Hulk Hogan was granting title defenses to other wrestlers. How does that lead to you getting World title matches?

A: It's called lying in the weeds, baby. I knew that at the snap of my fingers, I could and would wear that gold belt again. But I needed to lay

the foundation. Get the spotlight back where it belongs—on the “Nature Boy.” Feuding with Arn and reuniting the Horsemen did just that. WCW took notice, and I was in the title hunt once again in that triangle match.

Q: Which you won over Sting and Lex Luger by countout.

A: Sting and Luger should have been more concerned about me than each other. Even though they were taking it to me, they were distracted, knowing that sooner or later they were gonna have to face each other. You’d think that those two would have gotten a little smarter by now. While they were beating each other’s brains out, I was resting and waiting for my chance. I got it and took advantage of it and won.

Q: Then the big upset over Randy Savage.

A: Upset nothing. I’ve got 12 world titles to Savage’s three. [THE WRESTLER did not recognize the NWA title as a world title the last time Flair held it.] Any odds-maker would make me the favorite in that match. Besides, Starrcade is my night.

Q: Even though you had plenty of help from the Horsemen?

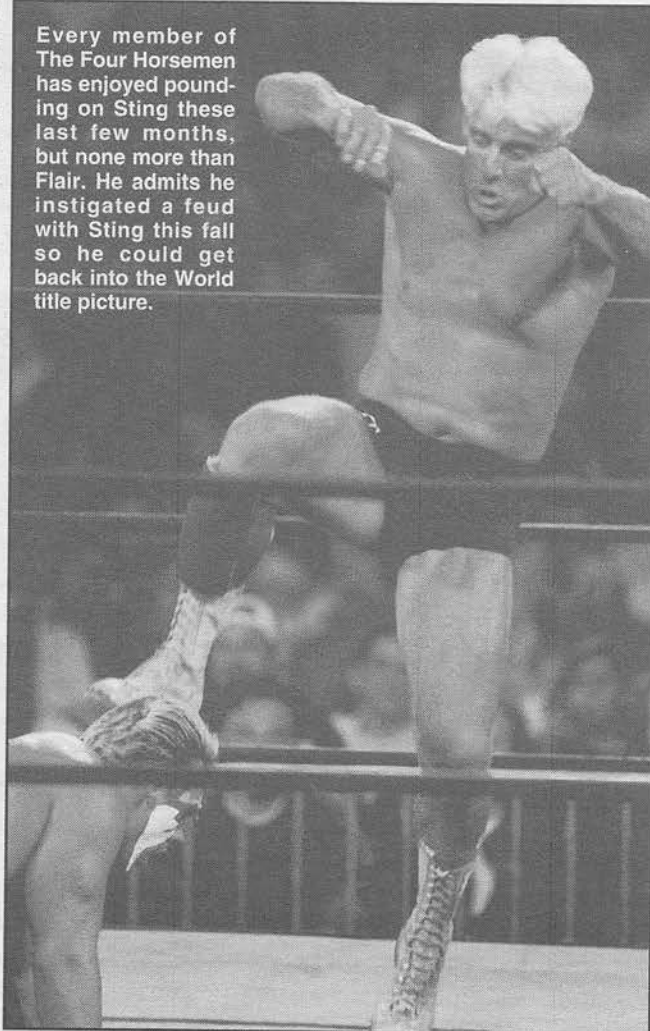
A: A win is a win. When they look back on the illustrious career of Ric Flair, they’re gonna see 12 world

titles over 15 years. Nobody thought any wrestler could beat Harley Race’s seven NWA World titles, but I did. Left him in the dust.

Q: Starrcade has been very kind to you. Outside of two losses to Sting, you have reigned supreme at that event.

A: That’s right. Harley Race, Dusty Rhodes, Ron Garvin, Lex Luger, Nikita Koloff, Vader, and now Randy Savage have felt the curse of the “Nature Boy.” While any wrestler can beat any other on a given night, Starrcade belongs to me. I am unbeatable on that night. I proved it first in 1983, and now in 1995.

Every member of The Four Horsemen has enjoyed pounding on Sting these last few months, but none more than Flair. He admits he instigated a feud with Sting this fall so he could get back into the World title picture.



Q: This is the first title for this Horsemen unit. Any plans to win more?

A: You even have to ask a question like that, Anderson? Of course there are. The Horsemen love the money, the stretch limousines, the Leer jets, and the gold around our waist. Tag team title, U.S. title, TV title. It doesn’t matter. We may hold them all before we’re through.

Q: Which combination would you say could make the best tag team unit out of you four?

A: Since I’m concentrating on my belt, Pillman and Benoit would give any team a run for their money. They’re young, tough, talented and

they have teamed before up in Calgary. Plus, they’re Horsemen. That pedigree alone is taking them right to the top. And you can never discount Arn. He’s shown that he can take any partner and make a team championship material.

Q: Why Chris Benoit this time?

A: Everyone was really shocked when we picked Chris. They all thought us choosing Luger was inevitable. But he has his own agenda that doesn’t fit with us. Selecting Chris was seen as a move similar to Paul Roma’s recruitment, but Chris is better. They don’t call him “The Canadian Crippler” for nothin’.

Q: You think Benoit and Roma are similar?

A: No, not even close. Benoit has talent and dedication that Roma only dreamed about. He has the potential to take the Horsemen into the next century. He complements us perfectly. Who wouldn't want him on their team?

Q: Do you regret the choice of Roma a few years back?

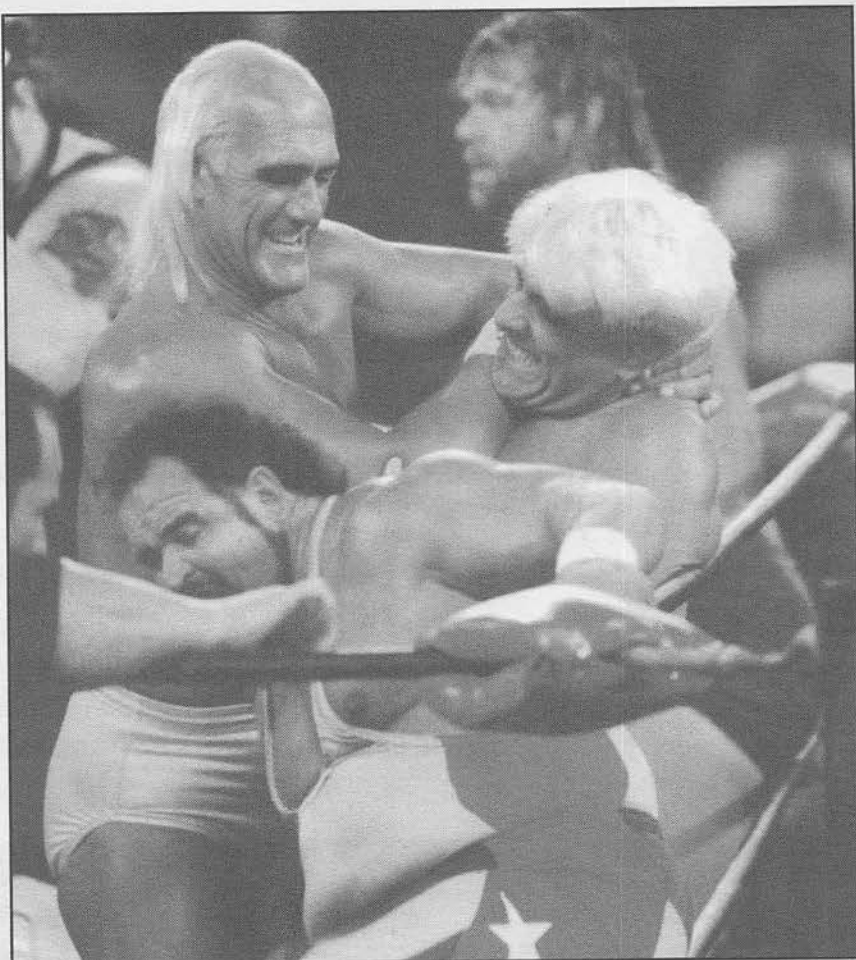
A: I never look back with regrets. At the time, we knew that Tully wasn't coming back. We wanted to shake things up a little and sign a young and hungry lion. Roma fit the bill. He had the ability, but he wasn't willing to work with us as a unit. He wanted a lead role, not a supporting part.

Q: As one of wrestling's first supergroups, you are now facing a challenge from another supergroup, the Dungeon of Doom.

A: Let me make this clear: I've never had a problem with Kevin Sullivan. But if he and that Zodiac freak continue to get in the way of me and my Horsemen, I will have a *serious* problem with him.

Q: But you have a productive relationship with Jimmy Hart and The Giant. In fact, by the time this magazine comes out, you will have teamed with The Giant against Hulk Hogan and Randy Savage. Doesn't that make you a bit nervous? As the World champion, you're definitely a target of everybody.

A: I know that better than anyone. I've said time and time again that Ric Flair is the dirtiest player in the game. No one has more dirty



Flair and Hulk Hogan tangled once again at the World War III battle royal. Flair acknowledges that one of his goals since he was reinstated in WCW was to do everything in his power to steal the spotlight from the "Hulkster."

tricks up their sleeve. But Jimmy, The Giant, and myself all have one common goal: beating Hogan and Savage. If they and Sullivan have ulterior motives, I have my Horsemen to neutralize that.

Q: So you're saying without a doubt that the Horsemen can handle the Dungeon of Doom?

A: Without breaking a sweat. The Horsemen are the very elite of this sport. The Dungeon is made up of a bunch of sideshow freaks with limited wrestling skill. No offense to The Giant, but Ric Flair could teach him a thing or two about wrestling.

Q: Do you consider this the twilight of your career?

A: You never know when that is. Early in my career, I didn't expect a broken back that almost ended everything. I didn't expect Hogan to force my involuntary retirement by cheating. I can still out-wrestle men half my age. I will hang up these boots when I decide it's time.

Q: Any final thoughts?

A: You write this down, Anderson, so the world can read it: Whether you like me or don't like me, you have to learn to live with the fact that Ric Flair and The Four Horsemen are back on top. There isn't a Hogan, Savage, Sting, Luger, or Giant that will knock us down this time. *Whooooooo!* ☐

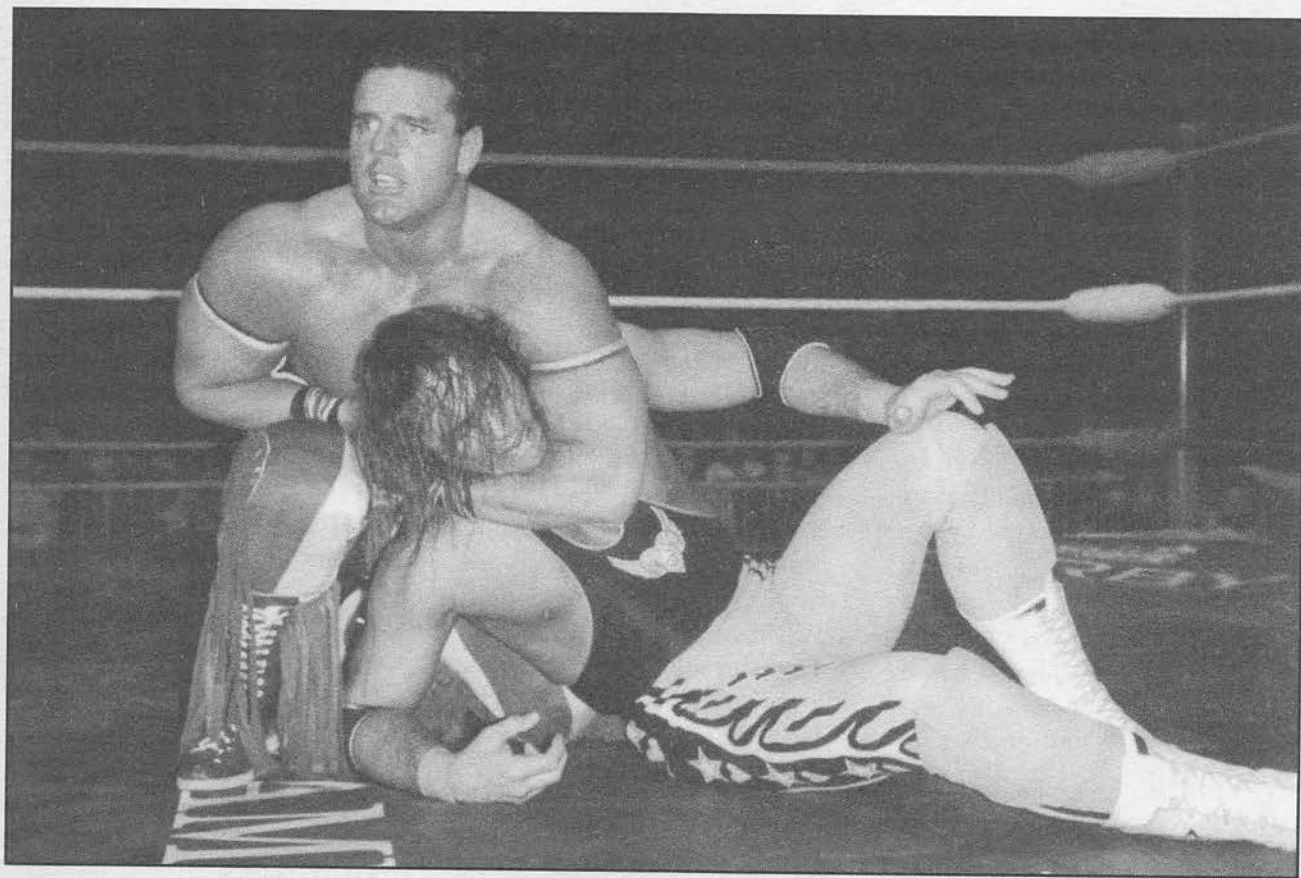
X- RAY

THE WRESTLER PANEL EXAMINES



**DAVEY
BOY
SMITH**

Each month
THE WRESTLER'S panel of experts
will offer candid opinions of one
of wrestling's stars. Whether an up-and-coming
youngster or an established superstar in his own right,
our panel will always be frank and honest without fear of reprisal



Davey Boy Smith applies a rear chinlock on Bret Hart during one of his bids to win the WWF World title. Are the "British Bulldog's" talents more suited to a scientific style? That's the question our "X-Ray" panel tries to answer.



CAPT. LOU ALBANO

"It's a shame. I used to manage the 'Bulldog,' so I know him well. He's not cut out to be a rulebreaker. I can see it in his eyes. Davey Boy was struggling when that low-life Jim Cornette flashed a lot of money in front of him, and he gave in. He musta thought a quick way to the top would be to turn bad. Well, brother, he got some World title matches against Bret Hart, but he failed in those. I hope he has the sense to come back to the good side soon."

Capt. Lou Albano, "The Guiding Light," has led 13 different tag teams to a record 17 WWF World tag team titles.



KILLER KOWALSKI

"A lot of people tell me they think Davey Boy Smith is a lousy rulebreaker, but I'm not sure they're right. He has potential. I just wish he signed with someone as bright as Jim Cornette a few years ago. It takes a while to become a good rulebreaker. In Davey Boy's case, I'd suggest patience. He might not win a title in the WWF in the next six months, but if he sticks with Cornette, he'll eventually get one. He should *not* go crawling back to the fan favorites."

Killer Kowalski, one of the most sadistic rulebreakers in the sport's history, runs a wrestling school in Reading, Massachusetts.



DORY FUNK JR.

"I don't know what to think of the 'British Bulldog.' A few years ago, I thought the best part of his career was behind him, but now I'm not so sure. Maybe in the long run he made a mistake by turning rulebreaker, but think about how close he came to winning the WWF title last year. He had Bret Hart busted open at In Your House in December. And he beat Bret cleanly just a few years ago. I see him as a threat to the WWF title for at least a few years to come."

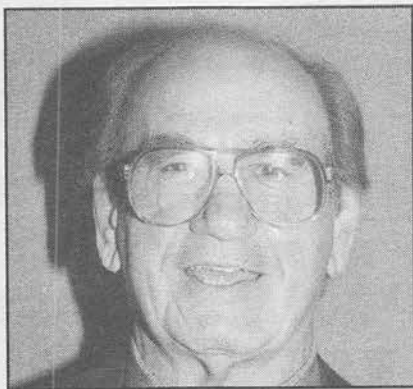
Dory Funk Jr. held the NWA World championship from 1969 to 1973. He still wrestles from time to time, primarily in Japan.



FABULOUS MOOLAH

"All you have to do, hon, is look at those bulging bicep muscles of his to know that the 'British Bulldog' is one of the strongest wrestlers in the world today. How many other wrestlers can put out an opponent with one devastating power-slam? I just think he relies too much on those power moves of his today. You could even say he's gotten a little lazy. Today's wrestler has to be more versatile. He ought to work on a submission hold or try to improve on his speed."

Fabulous Moolah, the finest woman wrestler in history, held the World title for 28 years. She trains wrestlers in Columbia, South Carolina.



LOU THESZ

"Someday Davey Boy Smith will regret becoming a rulebreaker this late in his career. He showed class in the ring for so long, and then he goes and ruins it by signing with Cornette. I still believe he'd go further at this stage in his career as a fan favorite. As a rulebreaker, he seems more interested in proving that he's badder and tougher than anyone else in the WWF. Being bad and tough will not necessarily win you titles. Being a good, smart wrestler will."

Lou Thesz held the NWA World title six times during his fabulous 50-year career. Many consider him the greatest all-around wrestler in history.



LANCE RUSSELL

"He had his shots at the WWF World title a few months ago, and he almost won it, but not quite. Now it might be a while before he is in line to get more title matches. Maybe it's time for Smith to go back to his roots and find a new tag team partner. People forget how great a tag team wrestler he was with Dynamite Kid. Even though Davey Boy is slowing down a bit, he's still one of the best in the WWF. With the right partner, he could make a run at the WWF tag title."

Lance Russell, a wrestling broadcaster since 1954, is now retired. He does periodic guest spots on WMC-TV in Memphis.

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Sabu is the protege of what legendary ring madman?

- 1) Abdullah The Butcher
- 2) The Sheik
- 3) Pampero Firpo
- 4) Cactus Jack

Paul Orndorff played pro football for what NFL team?

- 1) New Orleans Saints
- 2) Dallas Cowboys
- 3) Los Angeles Rams
- 4) New York Jets

True or False: Razor Ramon attended high school in Germany

- 1) True
- 2) False

Steve Austin was the first graduate of what professional wrestler's wrestling school?

- 1) Ultimate Warrior
- 2) Larry Sharpe
- 3) Chris Adams
- 4) Killer Kowalski

How did you do? If you're up for the challenge and want to put your wrestling knowledge to work, call now and go for the \$100!*

THE MOONDOGS: MANIACS ON A SHORT LEASH

QUITE BLUNTLY, The Moondogs have shocked the professional wrestling world. Neither fans nor journalists nor announcers nor promoters nor managers nor wrestlers know what to make of them. Captain Lou Albano, always eager to maintain a psychological edge, refuses to disclose whether they are, in fact, human beings or mutant offspring of large dogs.

Scorned and scoffed, despised and condemned, The Moondogs seem rather impervious to all the fuss about them.

"Give 'em a bowl of food, some clean water and change the box, that's all they want, they're happy, they're content, they love the Captain, that's all they care about, an occasional biscuit," said Captain Albano.

Others would like to give the canines something else.

"You know, I hate to see maniacs like that come into wrestling and try and cripple people," said Bruno Sammartino. "I think they are too dangerous and someone better get rid of them."

"I don't like The Moondogs, I would beat them up, I ready for action against them," said Pedro Morales.

"Moondogs?" Arnold

WRESTLER CLASSIC!

Think Goldust is weird? Then turn to page 42 ... or check out this "Wrestler Classic," which looks back 15 years to our May 1981 edition and some squared circle weirdness brought to the WWF courtesy of Captain Lou Albano!



Lou Albano had to do some fast talking after Madison Square Garden held him responsible for the pipes his Moondogs damaged in the dressing room.

Skoaland, manager of WWF champion Bob Backlund, shook his head puzzledly. "What can you say about them? Sometimes I feel very sorry for them, really pity them, especially the way Albano

treats them, whipping them and all. I treat my golden retriever better.

"Then again, they really worry me. How can you stop beasts, and that's the only word I can use, beasts who don't feel pain, who don't have to understand any human emotions? They would snap off a man's neck and bite his arms if they were hungry. They have barely begun to scratch the depths of their madness and, under Albano, they will be very dangerous. They can't be underestimated," Skoaland continued.

At this exact moment in WWF history, underestimating The Moondogs could prove fatal. Beneath the horrified comments pulses an undercurrent of fear. And confusion.

Strangely enough, the two people who should be most concerned with the 'Dogs are utterly unfazed. Is it that Tony Garea and Rick Martel, current WWF tag team champions, are so good they needn't worry about competition? Or are they overconfident, feeling, as too many others do, that The Moondogs are more bark than bite and not really worth bothering about?

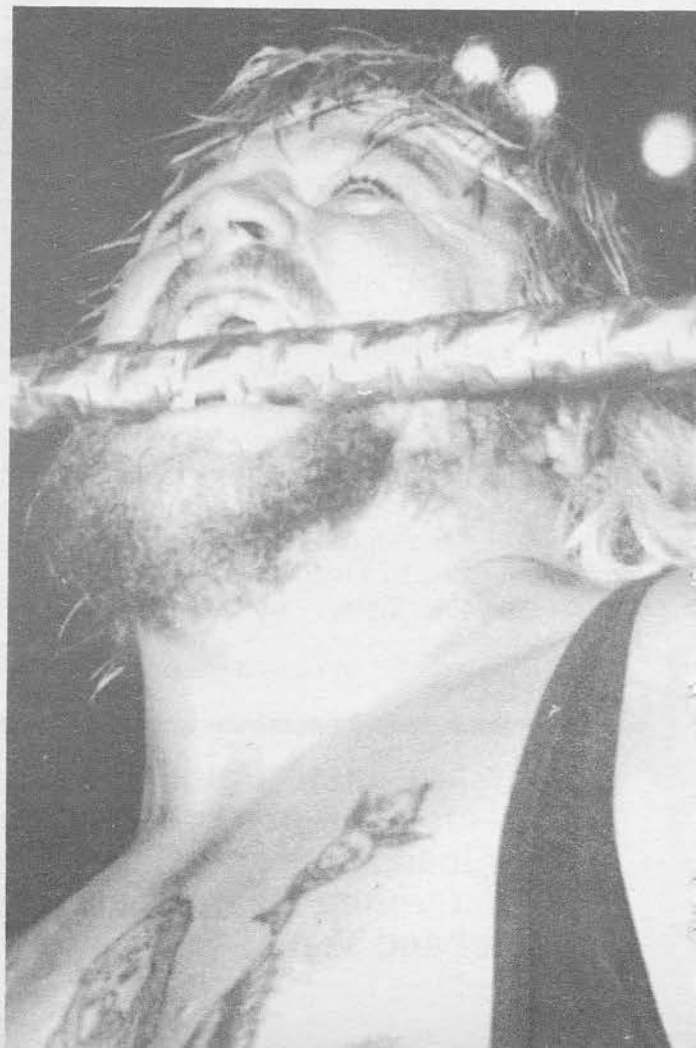
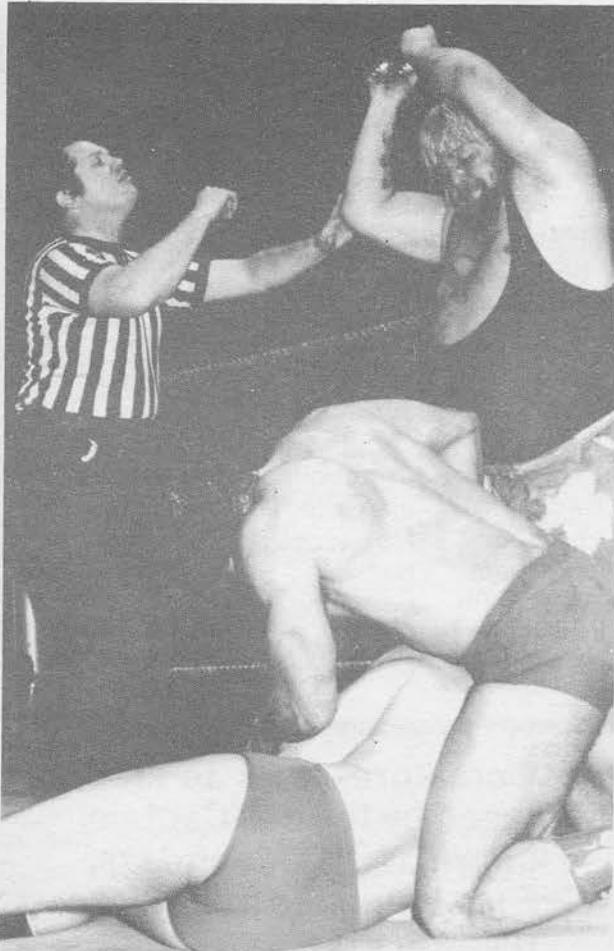
"Oh, we consider all challengers," said Garea. "It

They are, quite frankly, the weirdest creatures ever to step foot—or paw—in a wrestling ring. Managed by the evil Captain Lou Albano, Rex and King, otherwise known as The Moondogs, are determined to wrest away the WWF tag team title from Rick Martel and Tony Garea

PHOTOS BY BILL APTER & STU SAKS

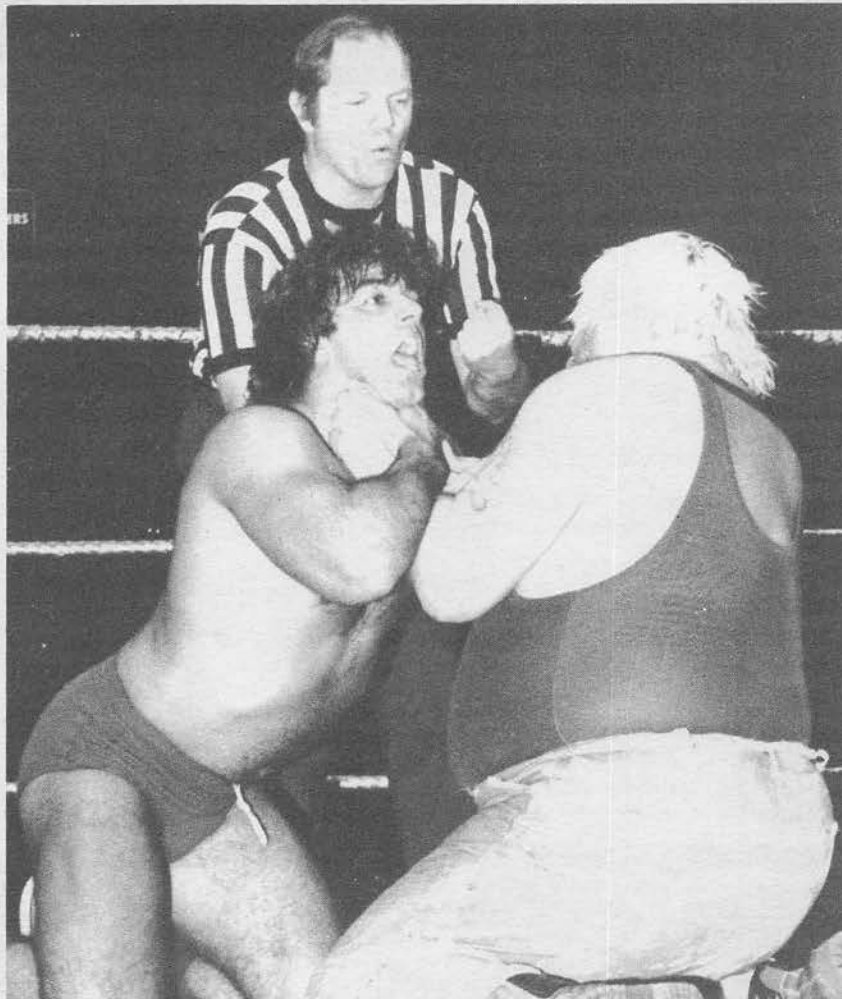


Above: King tries to rip off Dom DeNucci's left arm. Right: After a biting which opened Tony Garea's forehead, Rex whips the New Zealander across the ring to a waiting King. Below: King attacks Garea and Rick Martel with the belts the Moondogs failed to win.





Above: With referee Dick Kroll shielded from the illegal hair-pull, King drives Martel's face into his knee. Right: Kroll orders King to release Martel's throat. Below: King takes time out during the match to snack on the top rope.



doesn't matter who or even what they are. We make it a policy not to take anyone too lightly."

"Yeah, they're tough and rough and they love fire hydrants," Martel said laughingly in that combination disdain-bemusement all demonstrate when discussing the 'Dogs. "But we're not too frenzied, really. I mean, I don't lose sleep over them. They're just like any other challenger, we gotta prepare for them, plot for them, be careful, but not any more than any other."

Such thinking also ignores the history of Captain Lou Albano. Here is a man who has managed more tag team champions—nine—than anyone in wrestling history. He hasn't achieved such stupendous success by squandering his

twisted genius on losers.

Albano has demonstrated an eerie ability to take the weirdest of men, people one step removed from an asylum and give them purpose and direction. Albano seeks out such types.

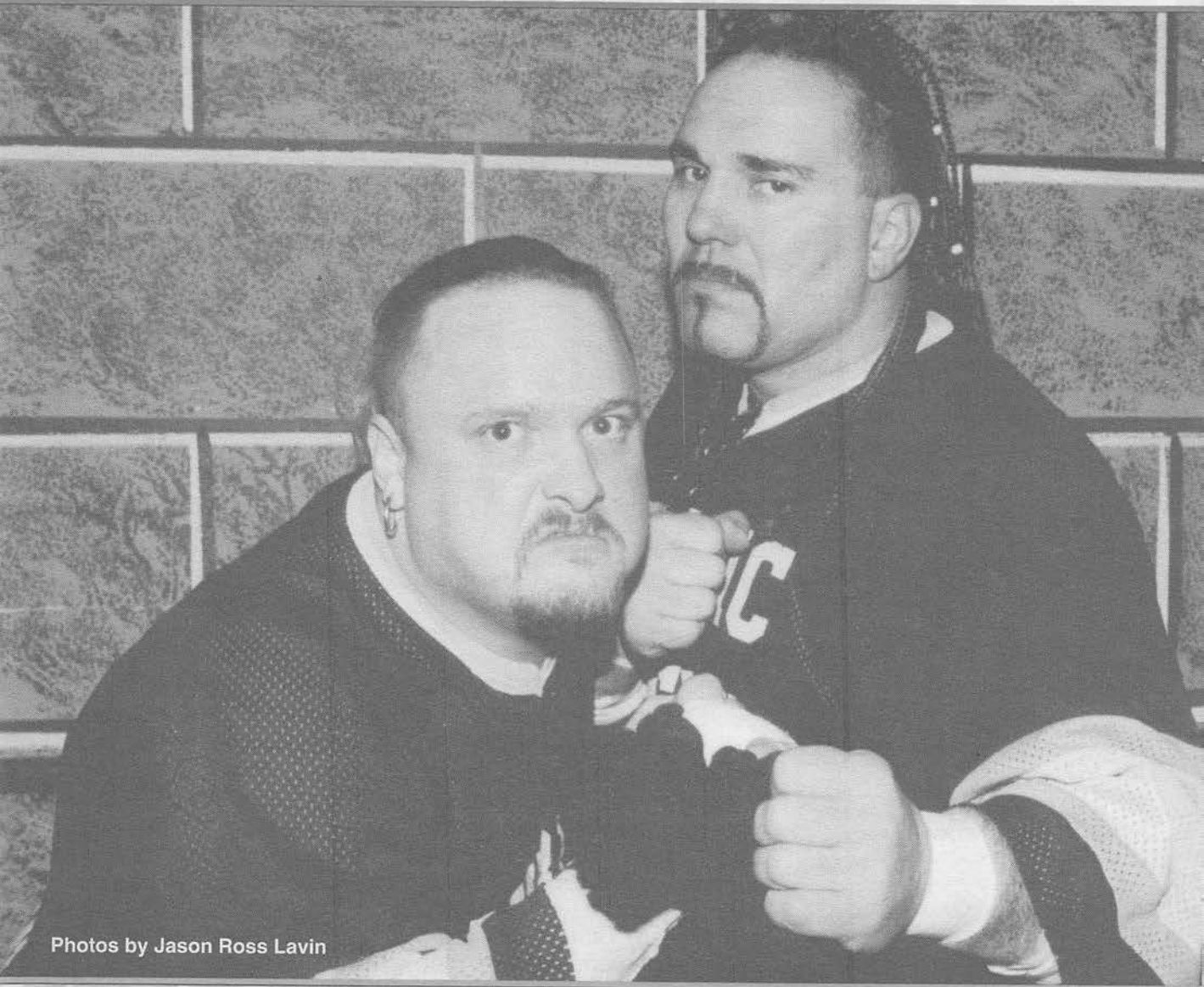
If any two lifeforms are entirely suitable for Albano's depraved purposes, it is Rex and King. To belittle them is to underestimate them. Too many confuse the two. Sure, The Moondogs are strange. But they are very dangerous.

"Rex and King are my pals, they man's best friend, they fetch, they beg, they roll over, they play dead, they get my slippers, fetch the paper, and they're gonna fetch me the WWF belts," boasts Albano.

Based on the Captain's past record, can anyone doubt him?" □

PUBLIC ENEMY WARNS WCW:

**"WE MAKE THE RULES
AROUND HERE!"**



Photos by Jason Ross Lavin

Uncensored, but not unmotivated, former ECW tag team champions Rocco Rock and Johnny Grunge have arrived in WCW ready to rumble and break bones!



upon in the WWF. Fortunately for Public Enemy, another suitor came calling, and Rock and Grunge made their WCW debut on January 15 at *Monday Nitro*. Will WCW be more to their liking?

"It don't matter," Grunge spat. "From now on, we're doing things our way, and if they don't like it, let them find another tag team. If you want Public Enemy, you take Public Enemy and don't try to turn us into some pansy team like The

Rocco Rock gets a kick out of smashing people he doesn't like through tables (left), and Johnny Grunge just loves choking his enemies with cords (below). Both members of Public Enemy plan to have a lot of fun in WCW.

By Dave Rosenbaum

IF WRESTLING federations had ratings like movies, ECW would be rated R, maybe NC-17. WCW would be rated PG-13. And, if you could ignore the occasional outrageousness of stars such as Goldust and "Adorable" Adrian Adonis, the WWF would be rated PG for occasional violence.

So when Public Enemy—Rocco Rock and Johnny Grunge—came to the WWF for one night only, it was like Steven Seagal or Jean-Claude Van Damme making a cameo appearance in *Toy Story*. Completely out of place and unable to do what they're best at, Public Enemy weren't as nasty as they wanted to be. Their WWF debut was a bust.

As it turned out, Public Enemy wrestled only that one WWF match, the dark match at the 1995 Survivor Series, and lost to WWF World tag team champions The Smokin' Gunns in a lame, non-violent affair that was nothing like the Public Enemy matches ECW fans came to love.

"We were trying to show everybody that there's more to us than



just brawling and kicking butt," Rock said. "That will never happen again. You dance with the one that brung you. We ain't gonna wrestle like a couple of schoolgirls no more."

Problem was, Public Enemy's type of ultraviolence was frowned

Rock 'n' Roll Express. We make the rules around here!"

They sent a warning to WCW Commissioner Nick Bockwinkel.

"If he doesn't like it, then he can shove that AWA belt of his where the sun don't shine," Rock swore. "Let him just try to throw the rule-



book at us. We got no use for some old man going around telling us what to do, and if he has a problem with that, let him go check ticket sales. That'll shut him up."

Rock and Grunge also sent a warning to WCW doctors, medical assistants, and ringside physicians.

"There could be a lot of blood and broken bones," Grunge warned. "Everybody's gonna get hurt when we're around. Blood is what happens when things get rough, and if they don't like that, then they can't deal with the natural order of things. Just get the stitches and the stretchers ready."

Of course, they sent a warning to the other WCW tag teams as well.

"We've dealt with a lot tougher than Harlem Heat," Rocco Rock said. "The Pit Bulls, The Gangstas, we wiped the floor with all of

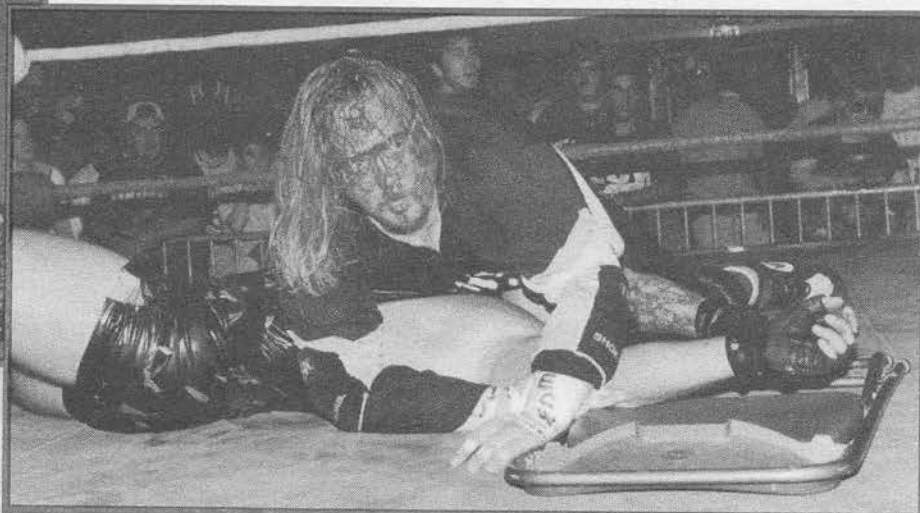
Rock legdropped The Gangstas' New Jack through a table in ECW probably more times than he can remember. If the people at WCW don't like such behavior, he says, well, that's their problem.

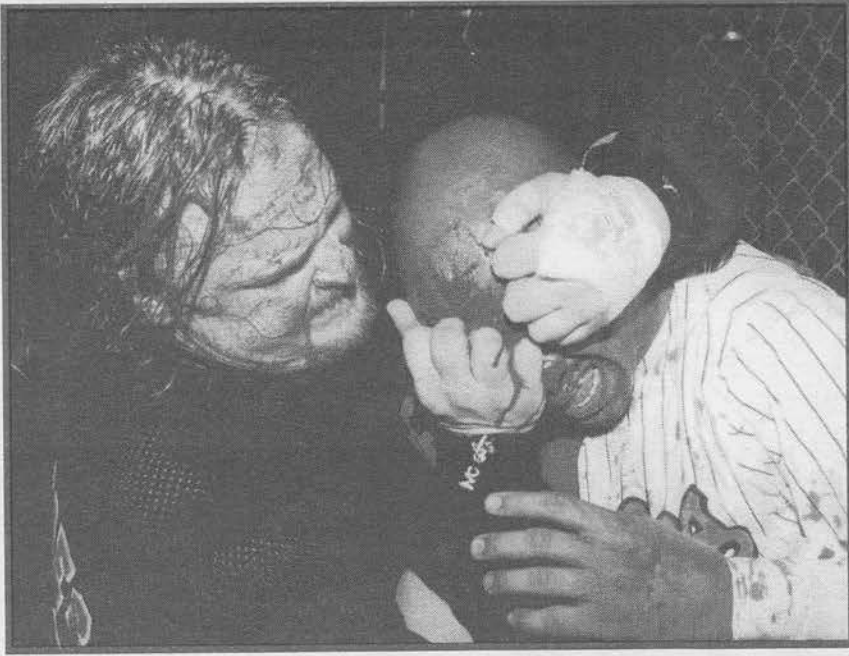
them, and now we'll wipe the floor with The Nasty Boys and Harlem Heat. Show no mercy! The rules have changed. There ain't no rules around here anymore."

No table or chair is safe. No foreign object shall go unused. During their violent ECW days, in which they won four ECW tag team titles, Public Enemy engaged in some of the bloodiest, most violent matches ever. In 2½



It didn't matter whether Grunge was locking up with New Jack (above) or one of The Pit Bulls (right), he almost always shed at least a little blood in his ECW bouts. Expect more of the same in WCW, he says.





This is about as brutal as wrestling gets: Grunge digging his fingers into the bloody face of New Jack. WCW Commissioner Nick Bockwinkel has warned Grunge and Rock that he won't tolerate excessive violence from them.

"Let me make this clear: I make the rules around here. I have the authority to suspend them, nullify their contracts, or do whatever is necessary—by any means necessary—to make sure they don't turn this federation into their own little playground. The promoters tell me they signed Public Enemy because they're an exciting team. Fine, but my idea of entertainment isn't wanton violence."

Good luck, Nick. When told of Bockwinkel's comments, Grunge and Rock broke out in hysterical laughter.

What's so funny? Nothing ... unless you're Public Enemy. □

years, they rarely got through a match without shedding blood, and their falls-count-anywhere feuds have become bootleg video collectors' classics. Their favorite maneuver is a legdrop ... through two tables.

"We've had baseball bat matches, barbed-wire matches, anything you can think of, so there's nothing Bockwinkel can throw at us that we haven't done," Grunge insisted. "We've been through it all, done it all, and survived. That's a problem a lot of teams around here are gonna have to deal with: how to beat a team that's already been to hell and back five dozen times."

Grunge and Rock showed some of their reckless ECW style in their WCW debut when Rock executed a double-table moonsault on Marcus Bagwell. After PE beat Bagwell and Scotty Riggs, the former WCW World tag team champions, they stacked two tables on top of each other, put Bagwell on the top table, then Rock drove him through both tables!

Their plan for WCW success is simple: Systematically and violently destroy every team in the federation until they're granted shots at

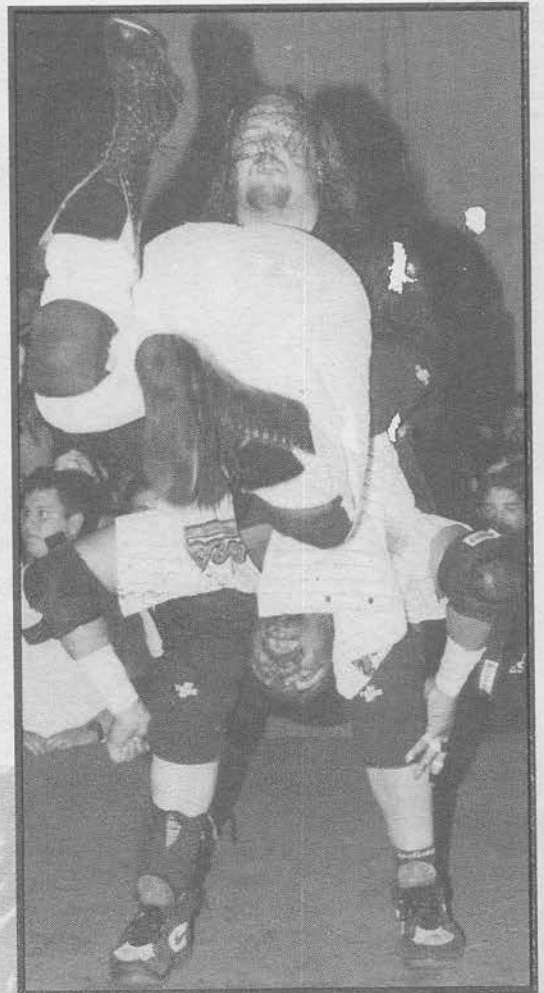
the tag team belts. Then escalate the violence and walk away with the belts, even if there's blood streaming down their faces.

In this sport, Public Enemy says, you can't be afraid of a little blood.

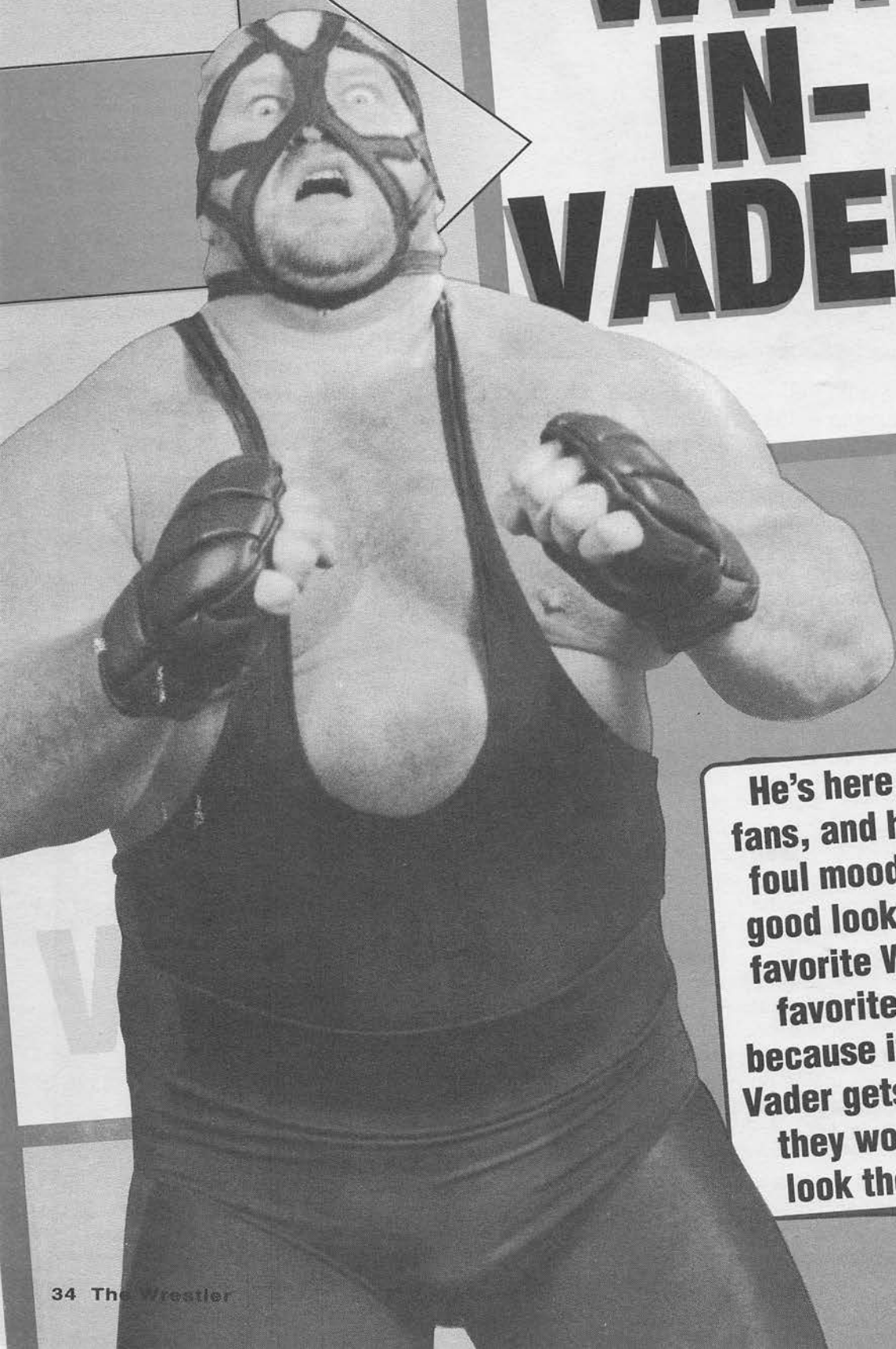
But what will Bockwinkel do if Public Enemy goes too far?

"Violence within the rules is perfectly acceptable," Bockwinkel said. "The use of foreign objects is not. Injuries are a part of wrestling. If Public Enemy stays within the rules and injures their opponents, there's not much we can do about that. There's a certain risk involved. But since our new guests have already felt the need to challenge my authority, I'll challenge them back."

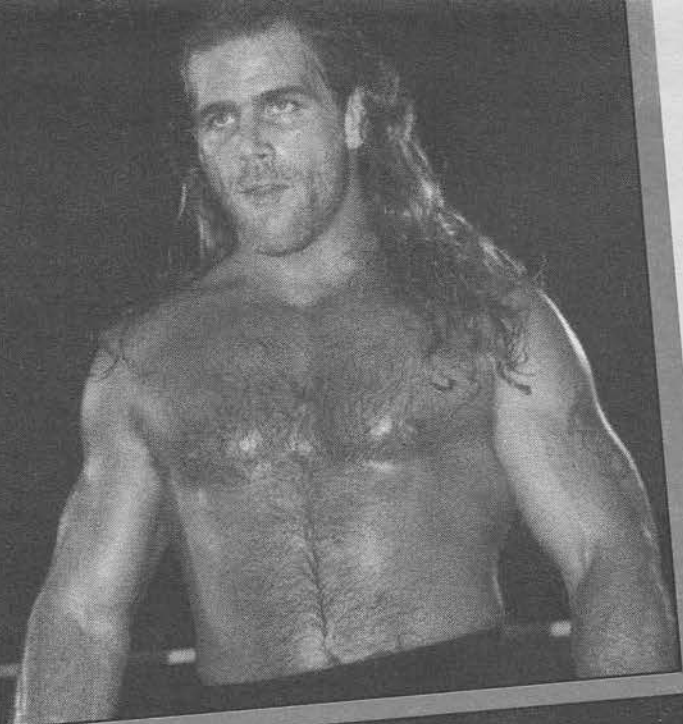
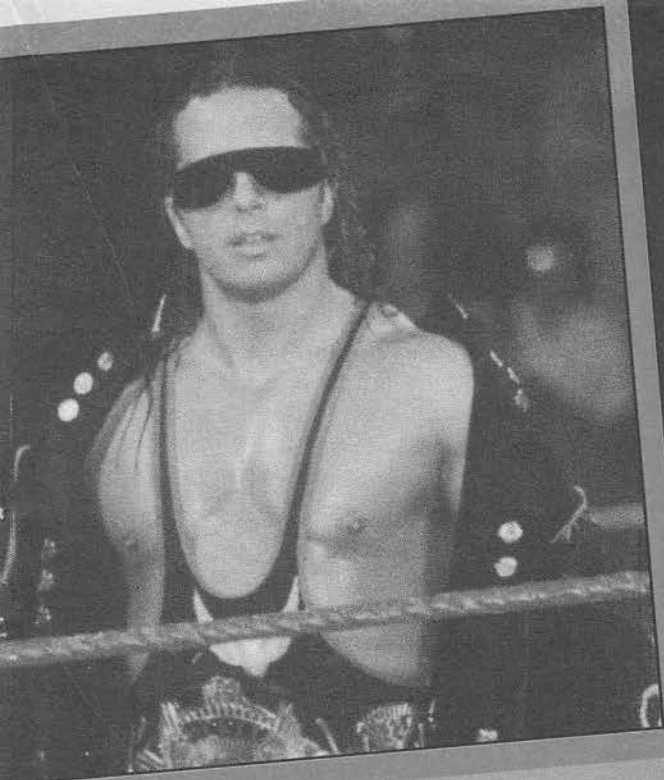
Whenever PE and The Gangstas clashed, the action always ended up on the arena floor. Piledriving an opponent on the floor is something that could get you suspended in WCW; Grunge and Rock, though, aren't worried about that.



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CAN BRET, SHAWN, & RAZOR PLAY THE PAIN GAME?

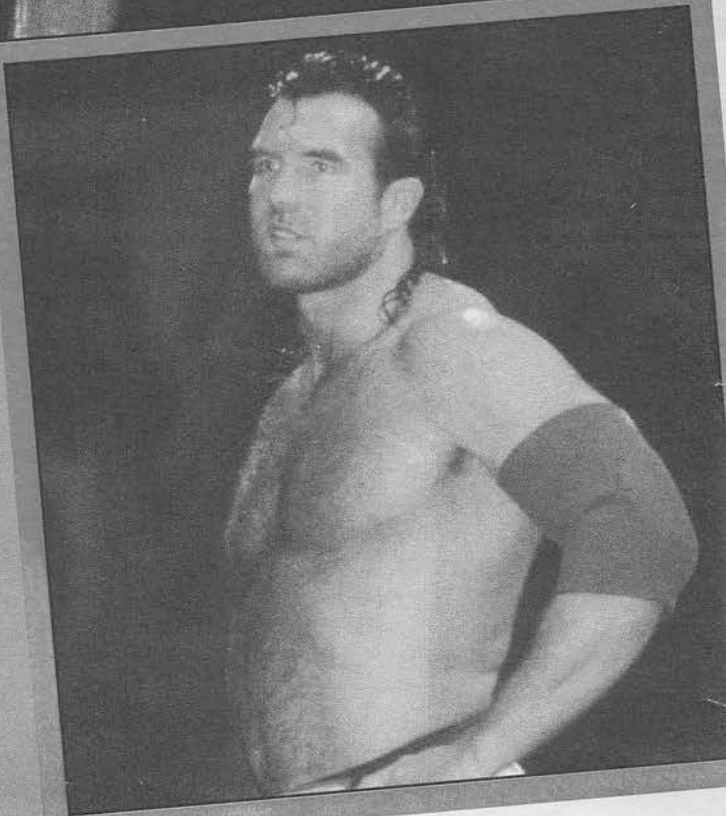
By Steve Anderson

WHENEVER A FAMOUS, championship-caliber wrestler enters a new federation, he does so amidst a lot

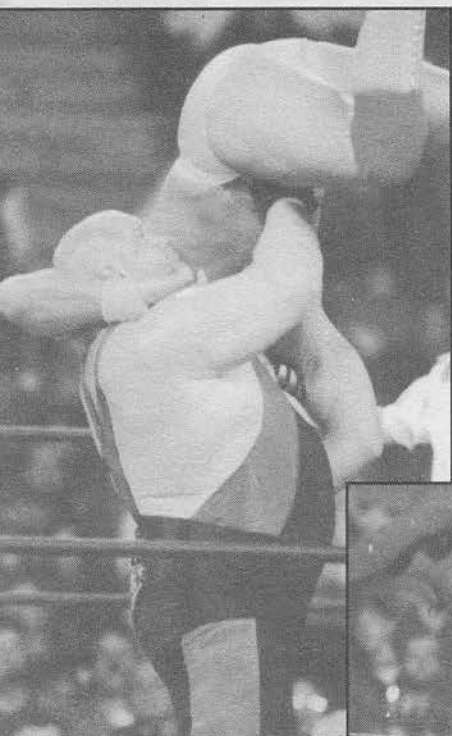
of hype and fanfare. The wrestler swings open the doors of his new home and enters, hoping to make an immediate impact.

But that is not the style of Big Van Vader. He doesn't swing

doors open. He knocks them down, smashes them to bits. And he did just that when he signed with the WWF this winter. Vader's pain game has a new home. He played it in WCW with almost



WWF



Forget the fact that Vader was never able to beat Hulk Hogan in WCW. There were times in their bouts when he overpowered the "Hulkster." Vader will be just as dangerous against anyone he meets in the WWF.

everyone and won three World heavyweight championships and one U.S. title. Now he's looking for fresh meat. Will the tough guys of the WWF hold up? They can only hope so.

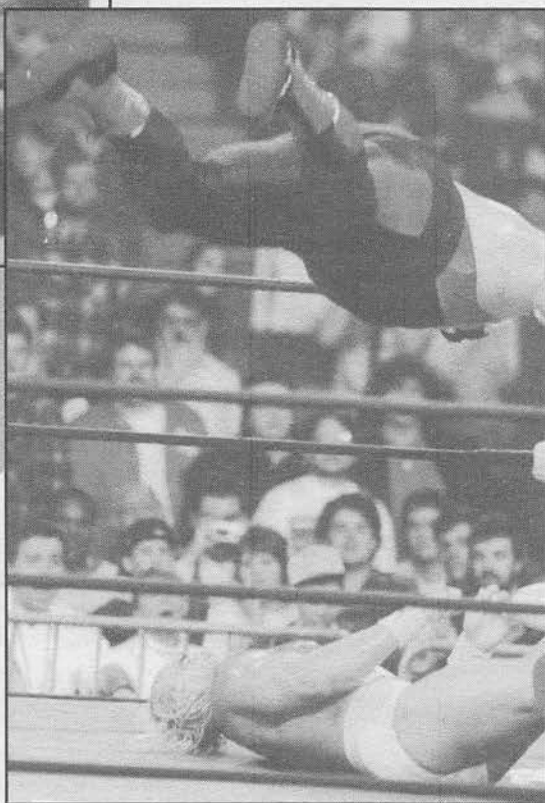
For months after his departure from WCW in late-August, Vader simply laid low. He took the time to let nagging injuries heal. But he didn't ignore wrestling altogether. He stayed in touch with what was happening by watching pay-per-views from his home in Denver. But he did not view WCW events. WCW was his past. He began watching the WWF, because the WWF, he knew, was his future.

"It was an education for me," Vader said just days before signing his WWF contract. "I was on the road so much in WCW that I

hardly ever had a chance to see what the WWF was doing."

"At first, this 'New Generation' crap seemed like a bunch of kids just sissy-slapping each other," he continued. "But then I began to see some toughness, brutality, and some recklessness. But still not on the level of Vader."

Vader watched with interest. He respected the WWF's best wrestlers, but respect matters little to Vader. Respect will not lessen the intensity of the pain that he will



be inflicting. His interest peaked while viewing the Bret Hart-Davey Boy Smith match at December's In Your House V. He took particular notice of the laceration Smith opened on Hart's head.

"I smelled blood, brother," Vader recalled. "And when a monster smells blood, he has to follow it. I needed to inflict that kind of pain again!"

So the trail of blood left by Bret Hart guided Vader to Stamford, Connecticut, WWF headquarters. And before the ink was dry on the contract, Vader entered his name

into the Royal Rumble.

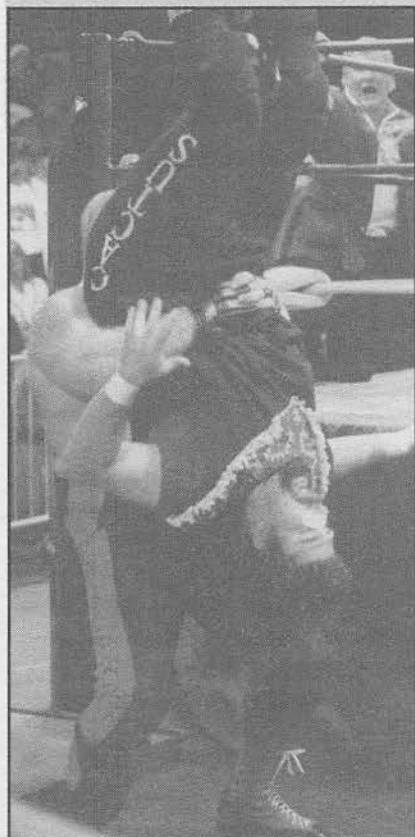
"The Royal Rumble is the perfect event for Vader to make his WWF debut," he said. "I can break a bunch of bodies at the same time. Then they'll know what Vader is all about!"

Suddenly, his mood turned darker.

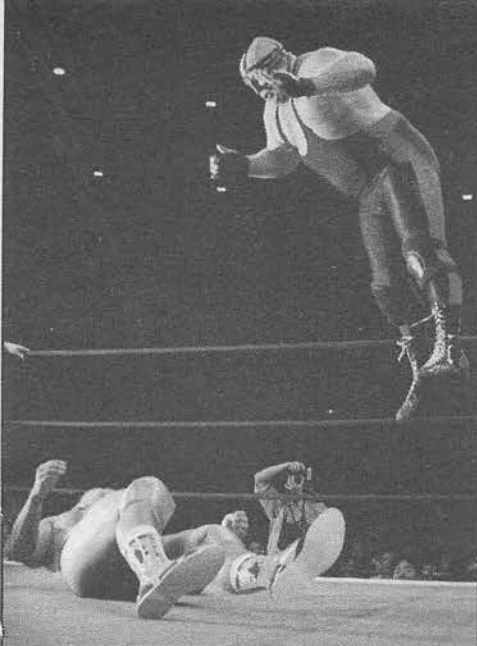
"But I don't have to prove myself to any man!" he shouted. "I've won titles on three different continents, brother. That speaks for itself!"

Vader's arrival in the WWF has fans wondering how he would do against the best of the best in that federation. How would the "New Generation" fare against this crippling behemoth? Vader offered his opinions.

"Razor Ramon would be a little grease spot when I'm through with him!"



Don't think everyone in the WWF isn't aware of this incident. Cactus Jack nearly suffered permanent damage to his spinal cord when Vader powerbombed him on a concrete floor. Something like this could happen in the WWF, too.



There have been plenty of dominant big men in the WWF over the years, but none of them had the agility and aerial skills of Vader.

"I'd use Shawn Michaels for kindling after I broke him in two!"

"Diesel's a big man, but he's only a man. I'm a big monster!"

"I'd shove The Undertaker in his casket, and he'd never get out!"

"Bret Hart should just surrender the title to me now before I execute him!"

These men have all faced big men before. But Vader is the man—or, as he says, *monster*—who nearly crippled Ron Simmons and Sting, who broke Joe Thurman's back, and who power-

Davey Boy Smith ought to be glad he's a WWF rulebreaker now, because if he were a fan favorite, he might once again be a target of Vader, just as he was in WCW in 1993.

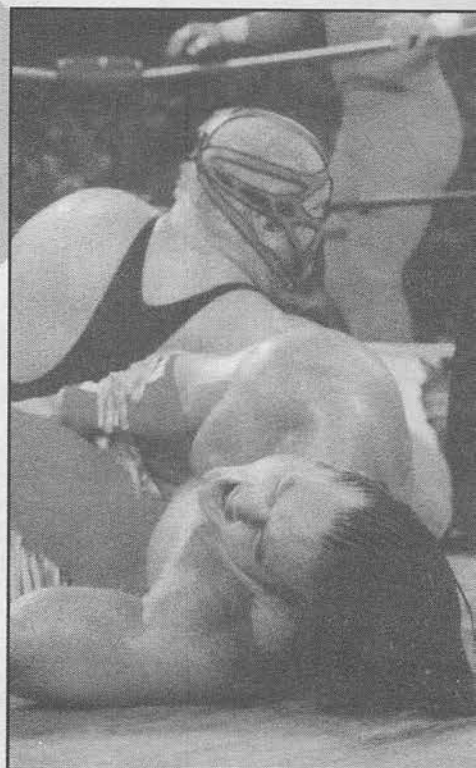
bombed Cactus Jack into a state of amnesia. The pain game can start without a moment's hesitation.

Ramon, Michaels, Diesel, and Hart have no intention of just surrendering their rankings and reputations to an outsider. Vader will have fights on his hands with these and other WWF stars. They will serve as obstacles in his path to the WWF World title. Vader wants to turn these obstacles into broken bodies strewn along his path to the belt.

Vader's reputation as acrippler certainly preceded his arrival. Although they put up a tough front, many preliminary wrestlers and even a few established stars have already refused to enter the ring with the mammoth former WCW World champion. One fan favorite spoke on the condition of anonymity.

"I'm not too anxious to get into the ring with that maniac," he said. "It's not a matter of being able to win. I know I can beat him on my best day. But he's more reckless and dangerous than anyone I've ever seen. I've got a wife and family to think about."

But while some wrestlers are trying to avoid confrontations with



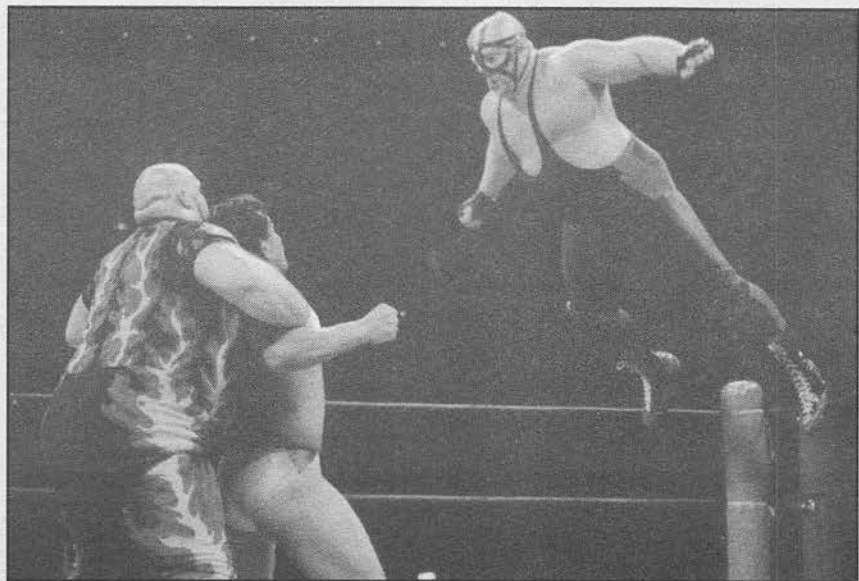
Vader, other competitors and managers are lining up to form alliances—alliances that will provide some protection from Vader. That didn't surprise him.

"Hogan did the same thing," said Vader. "He buddied up to me so I wouldn't inflict any more pain on him. He didn't realize that Vader does not need friendships."

It is clear that the WWF will not and cannot change Vader. Ask him to tone down his violent ways and he would probably become more brutal just to spite you. Vader will be Vader. And that's enough to cause most WWF wrestlers to lose a few hours of sleep. They all know Vader's impact will be huge.

The clock is ticking. Vader has the board all laid out, and he's rolling the dice, ready for the WWF version of the pain game to begin. The sand slips through the mini-hourglass. Soon, for all WWF wrestlers, it will be ... Vader time! ☐

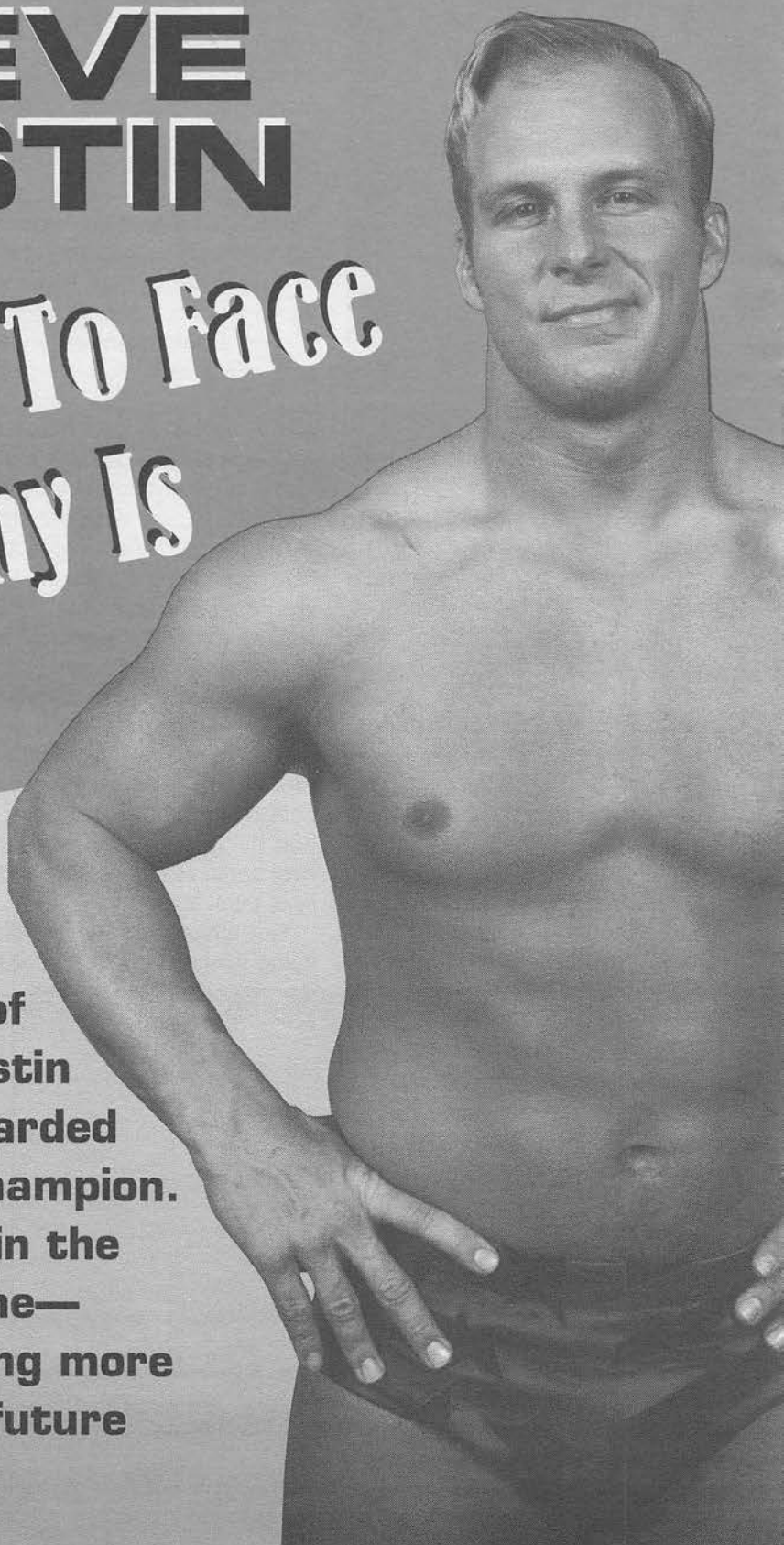
Vader won an IWGP tag team title with Bam Bam Bigelow in 1992. In the WWF, however, he's not looking to make friends or find tag team partners. He wants to enjoy his pain game all by himself.




"RING MASTER" **STEVE** **AUSTIN**

**The Time To Face
His Destiny Is
Now!**

Since the beginning of his career, Steve Austin has always been regarded as a future world champion. However, he arrives in the WWF still without one—and with people asking more questions about his future than ever before





Ring Master" Steve Austin now has Ted DiBiase for a manager and has learned DiBiase's "Million-Dollar Dream" sleeper. He'll need more than a shrewd manager and a good finisher to win the WWF World title.



By Chris Bernucca

EVERYWHERE HE HAS gone, Steve Austin has been asked the same question:

"When are you going to win a world title?"

It was asked of Austin when he burst on the wrestling scene in Dallas, a product of Chris Adams' training. It was asked again when he made the jump to WCW and showed that he was a world title-caliber wrestler by winning just about every title *except* the World

title. And it was asked once more when, frustrated with federation politics, he moved on to ECW and talked tougher than he tussled.

Now Austin is in the WWF. And people are no longer asking. The question has become an order.

"You better win a world title!"

There's nowhere for Austin to hide anymore. There are no more excuses to be made. He is no longer too young, too unfocused, too hard-headed, or too banged up. He is in the spotlight now, with a crafty, influential, and

wealthy manager who can pull all the right strings. He even has a catchy new nickname ("Ring Master") that belies his performance of late.

It is time for Steve Austin to face his destiny.

"That was something you guys took from me and ran with," Austin said. "You reporters seem more caught up with it than I am. I'm going to win a world title. And when I do, all of you are going to have to admit that I am one of the greatest of all-time. Mark my words."

We have been marking your words, Steve. We've also been marking the words of many of your peers and ours who also felt you were destined for greatness and are as puzzled as we are by your career.

Let's flash back to 1991, when Austin made his WCW debut. It

was just weeks later when he was described as a "young Ric Flair" by broadcasters. It was easy to draw the correlation. Young, blond, and oozing confidence. Three years later, former NWA World champion Rick Steamboat went so far as to dub Austin the "21st Century 'Nature Boy'" and write a story about him for one of our magazines.

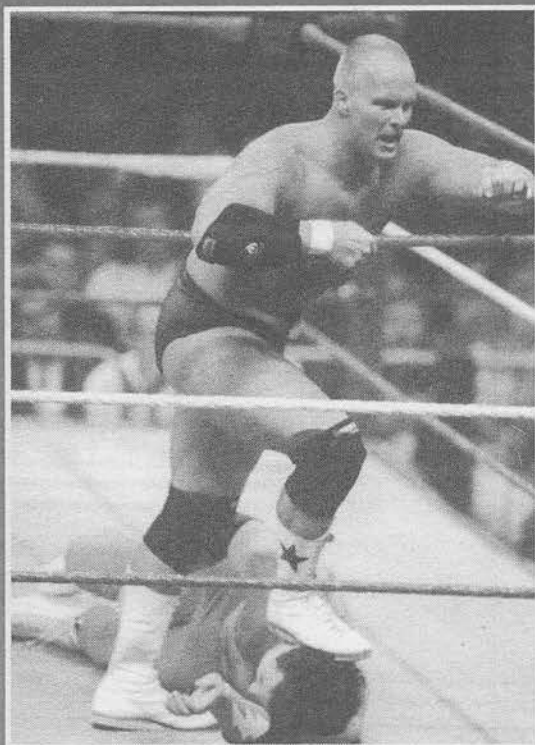
But that is where the similarities ended. Although Austin captured two TV titles, two U.S. titles, and one WCW World tag team title, the WCW World heavyweight title remained out of his grasp. To add insult to injury, Flair—who is almost old enough to be Austin's father—has won four world titles (two WCW, two WWF) since Austin made his WCW debut.

"Steve Austin was good, but he was never as good as he thought he was," said Rick Rude, a former

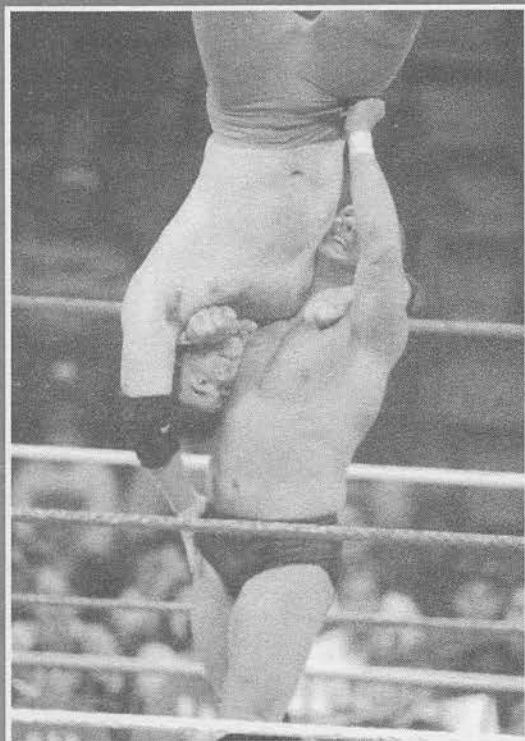
stablemate of Austin's who held the WCW U.S. title for more than one year himself. "The guy believed more in his press clippings than in himself. The Steve Austin phenomenon was created by writers and broadcasters, not by anything he ever did in the ring."

Any shot Austin had of winning the WCW World title ended when Hulk Hogan arrived and began a feud with Flair that is still raging today. Matters weren't helped when Austin lost the U.S. title to Hacksaw Duggan at Fall Brawl '94, then suffered a serious knee injury that sidelined him for several months. Unable to fulfill his quest and fed up with federation executives, Austin flew the coop for ECW, where he immediately became a big fish in a small pond.

Austin dubbed himself the "Extreme Superstar" and bad-mouthed WCW, claiming he was



Austin arrogantly steps on the head of WWF preliminary wrestler Hank Varney. He insists he'll prove all his critics wrong by winning the WWF title. We've heard that kind of talk before, though.



The vertical suplex is just one of the many moves Austin executes well, and he has already won many major titles. But unless he does something special in the WWF, we'll have to wonder whether we overrated him all these years.

never given a fair shot at the World title there. Given his track record and the benefit of the doubt, many agreed that the ECW heavyweight title was his to lose.

But either the quality of competition in ECW was badly underestimated or Austin's skills were badly overestimated. Whatever the case, Austin never won the ECW belt, losing to the likes of The Sandman and Mikey Whipwreck. His ego shattered, he slithered out of ECW and into the WWF, where tough talk and a token get you on the turnpike.

"I've always been impressed with Steve Austin," said Barry Windham, a former WCW rival. "He has always had the skills, and his confidence and charisma will be a perfect fit for all the egomania in the WWF. With the right man helping him, he could win the World title. It's not like Bret Hart or anyone else contending for the

World title is unbeatable."

"The 'Ring Master' is more than tough enough to handle the WWF," said Ted DiBiase, Austin's new manager. "He's going to dominate the WWF. Hart, Michaels, and all the rest of those bums have never seen anything like him. He's going to become World champion, and when he does, he's going to be champion for a long time."

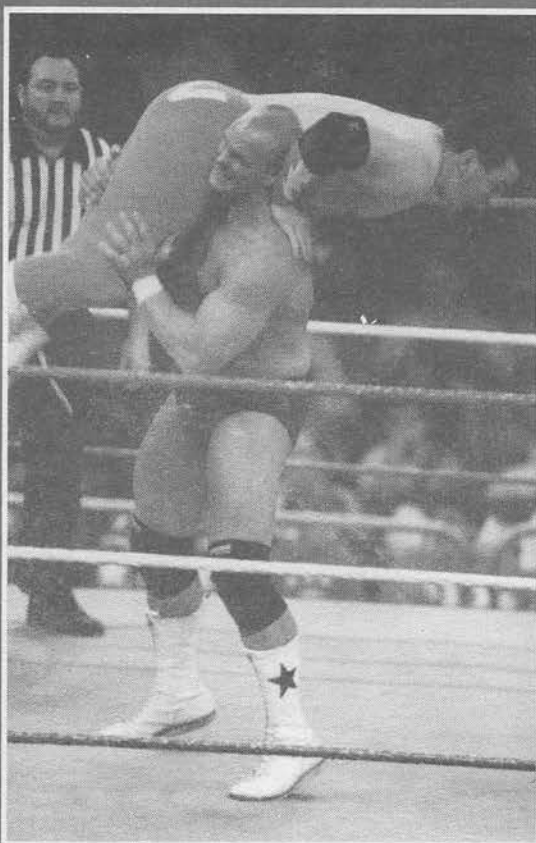
DiBiase thinks so highly of Austin that he has given him his old Million-Dollar belt and taught him his old "Million-Dollar Dream" sleeperhold. But all that does is put more pressure on Austin, who is making everyone wonder if all the talk by him and about him has been just that—talk. The excuses will ring hollow if Austin is unable to face his destiny now.

But what is Austin's destiny? Perhaps he has never been world championship material. Maybe the

titles he won in WCW were the pinnacle of his career and he is in the throes of a long and steady slide downward, never to reach those heights again. Possibly, the phrase "world champion" and the name "Steve Austin" will remain mutually exclusive commodities. Perhaps the reason he has jumped around from federation to federation is that he is afraid to face his real destiny. Perhaps he knows in his heart that he isn't as good as some people think.

Austin, DiBiase, and their supporters say that is not the case. They insist their man is destined for the greatness that accompanies a world title victory. They maintain that the tough talk will finally be supported by some actions in the ring.

For someone who calls himself "Ring Master," that would be a good place to start. □



Austin (shown lifting Varney) could be just another better-than-average wrestler who peaked early in his career. We just hope he stays in the WWF long enough for us to figure out what his destiny is.



The Sandman is a tough wrestler, but few expected Austin to have trouble beating him for the ECW title in 1995. He never did win that title, however, and left before accomplishing much in ECW.

THINK GOLDUST IS WEIRD?



“REMEMBER THE NAME ... Goldust!” How many times has Goldust said that to Razor Ramon over the past few months? We still don't know what possessed Dustin Rhodes to transform himself into Goldust. Whatever the reason, he can rest assured that we will always remember Goldust. How could *anyone* forget him?

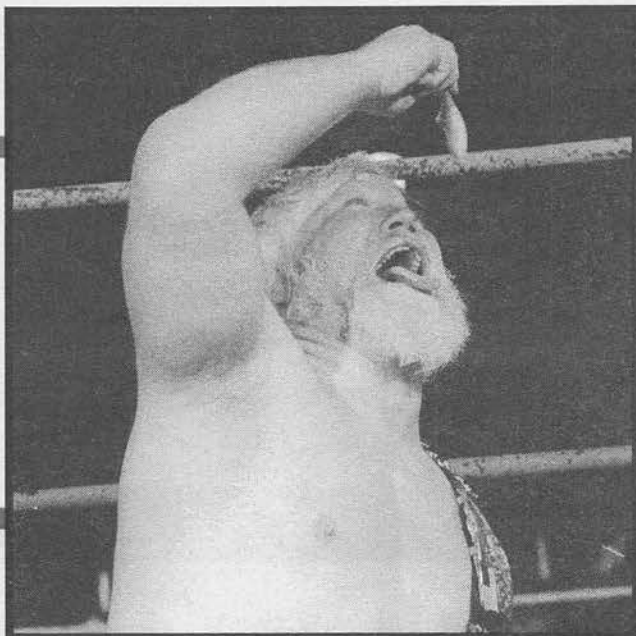


“EXOTIC” ADRIAN STREET

Look closely at the expression on Street's face. Check out the way he purses his lips. Look familiar? Could this be Goldust's hero? Adrian Street had something Goldust doesn't have: Miss Linda. Linda, who was never as dainty as the average valet, used to spray Street with perfume once he got into the ring. Yes, it was safe to say he was somewhat effeminate. But Street had another thing in common with Goldust: Once the bell rang, he, too, was also a fine wrestler.

MOONDOG MAYNE

All sorts of Moondogs have found their way into wrestling rings over the years. Too many, some people say. Rex ... Spot ... Cujo ... Splat. Those are just a few of them. Sometimes they would even gnaw on dog bones. But Moondog Mayne was by far the strangest. He liked to bite opponents in the ring, and among his favorite snacks were light bulbs, and as this photo shows, live goldfish. Yum!

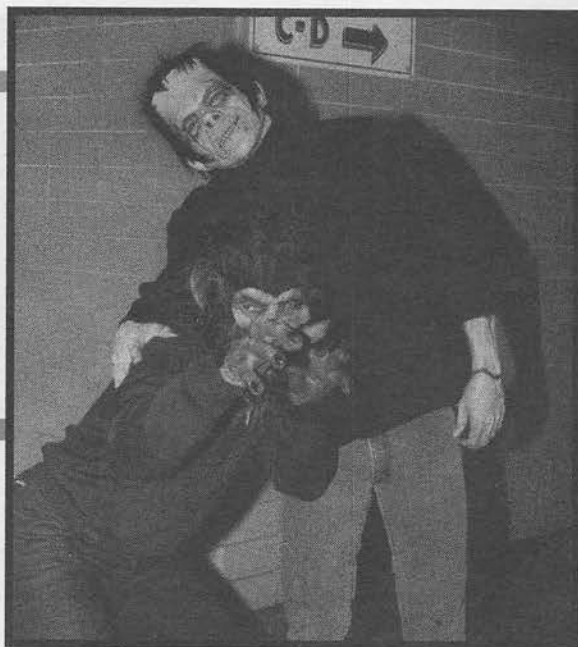


CHECK OUT *THESE* WRESTLING ODDITIES!

Many fans have written to tell us that Goldust is the strangest wrestler they have ever seen. They might change their opinion after getting a look at the odd cast of characters we came up with after doing an exhaustive search of our extensive photo files. Think Goldust is weird? Well, wait until you get a look at ...

FRANKENSTEIN AND THE WOLFMAN

No, these aren't two fans spending their Halloween night at the matches. There were actually two wrestlers that went by the names of Frankenstein and The Wolfman. They wrestled briefly in the Memphis area in the late-1980s. And believe it or not, they did *not* take off the masks when they wrestled. They didn't scare anyone with their wrestling skills.

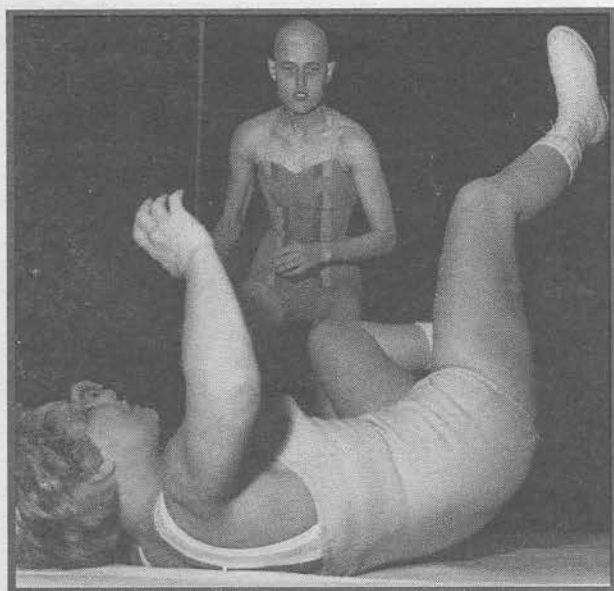


MISS ATLANTA LIVELY

Who is that lovely lady on the left, the one with Jimmy Valiant and Big Mama? Would you believe that it's former NWA World champion Ronnie Garvin? You know, "The Man With The Hands Of Stone." What possessed Garvin to dress like—and wrestle as—a woman ... well, we never figured that one out, but Garvin sure looked like he was enjoying himself. We'll say it again: Think Goldust is weird?

RICKI STARR

Strike a pose! Remember when some WWF fans used to criticize Lex Luger for wearing trunks that were too tight and/or too short? Those people obviously never saw Ricki Starr. Starr was famous for prancing nimbly around the ring, kissing and pinching opponents and referees, and wearing ballet slippers when he wrestled. But all ballet dancing aside, Starr was one tough brawler.

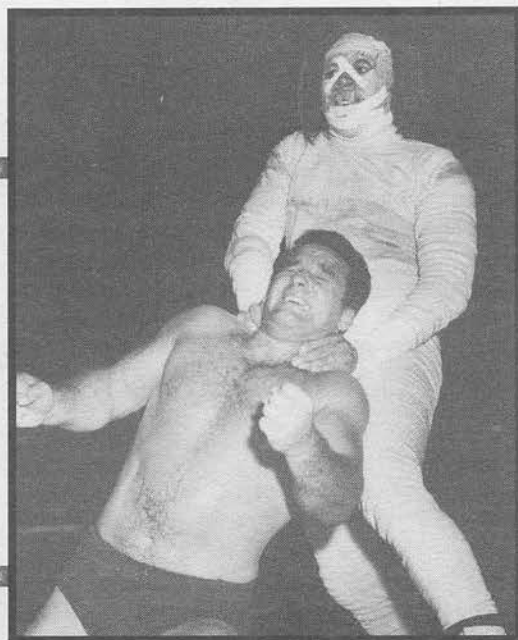


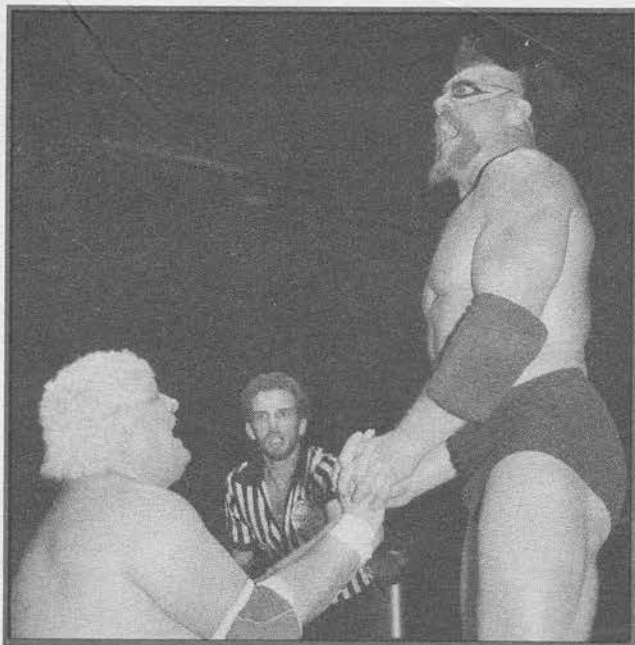
YULIE BRYNNER

She wasn't actually related to famous actor Yul Brynner, who was perhaps best known for his performance in *The King And I*, but Yulie Brynner looked like she could have been, didn't she? A lot of today's best female wrestlers will tell you that they want you to be impressed by their wrestling skills, not their looks. That was never a problem when it came to Yulie.

THE MUMMY

For a man who insisted he was thousands of years old, The Mummy looked pretty good and wrestled even better. He was a master of many nerveholds, but a lot of people never noticed that. They just couldn't help but stare at the many bandages that were wrapped around The Mummy's body. Smoky Mountain fans might find that he looks a lot like Prince Kharis, a mummy who caused quite a stir in that promotion a few years ago. Hey, for all we know, Kharis and this Mummy are one and the same guy.





THE MISSING LINK

This guy was so strong that he was able to bring Dusty Rhodes to his knees begging for mercy! More than strong, though, this man was strange! He wore very odd face paint, used to tug on his own hair as he entered the ring, and just seemed like he was dazed and disoriented everywhere he went. But boy was he tough! No one ever accused him of being effeminate.

GIANT GONZALES

Also known as El Gigante, but it wasn't until he became Gonzales in the WWF that this man became very strange. Okay, so anyone who stands 7'7" and weighs 435 pounds is apt to stand out in a crowd. The question we have for Gonzales, however, is this: What were you thinking when you decided to put on a bodysuit with fake muscles and fake body hair? Were you just trying to call attention to the fact that you had a lousy physique? Gonzales was the tallest man in the history of pro wrestling, and he may have also been the least coordinated pseudo-star in WWF history. The reason this Argentina native hasn't been seen in the ring lately is that he now spends much of his time on his farm in his native country. Probably a smart career move.

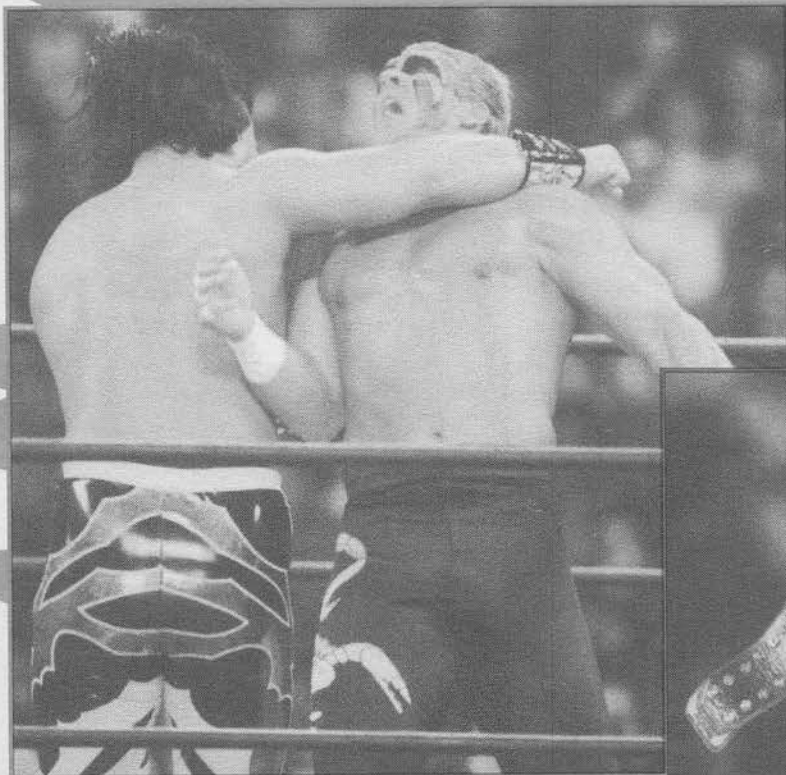


"ADORABLE" ADRIAN ADONIS

Last, but not least. You can't help but notice that the Dustin Rhodes and Adrian Adonis stories are quite similar. Both started out as tough-as-nails brawlers, then ended up undergoing odd personality changes during one of their stops in the WWF. Adonis, for some reason that was never explained, started wearing housedresses, makeup, and his voice suddenly got much higher. He also began hosting "Flower Shop" segments on WWF telecasts. But Adonis, like Dustin, never lost his toughness in the ring. □



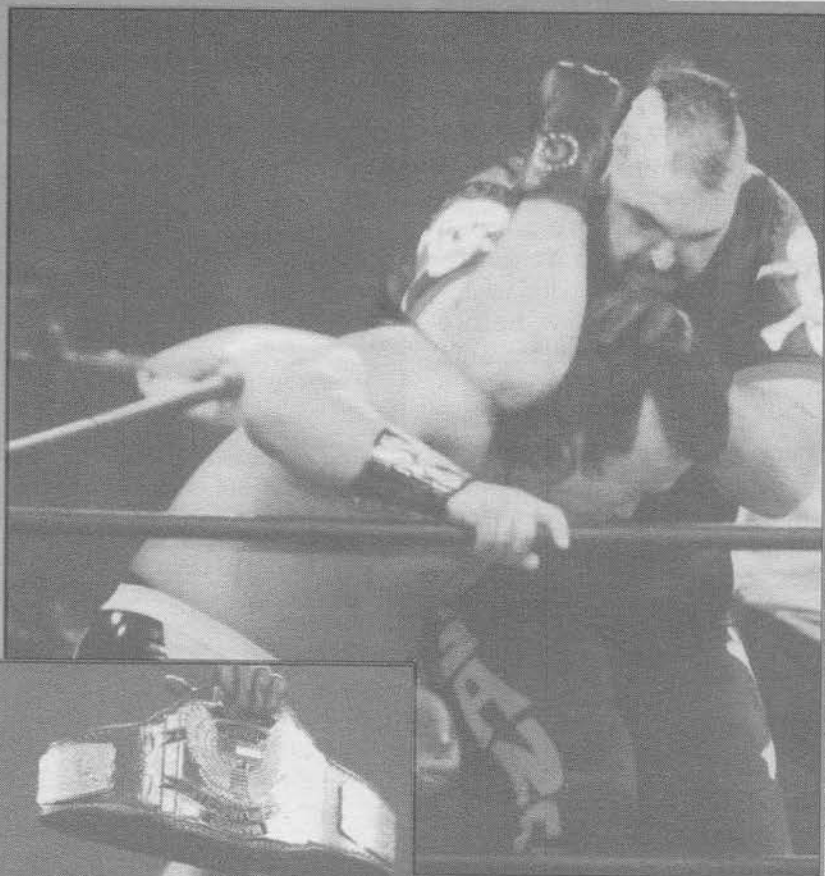
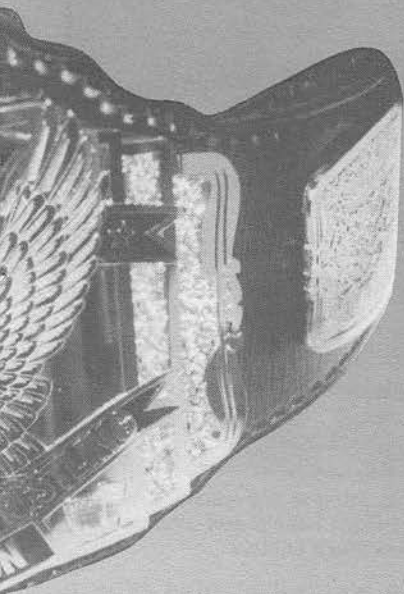
Championship Outrage!



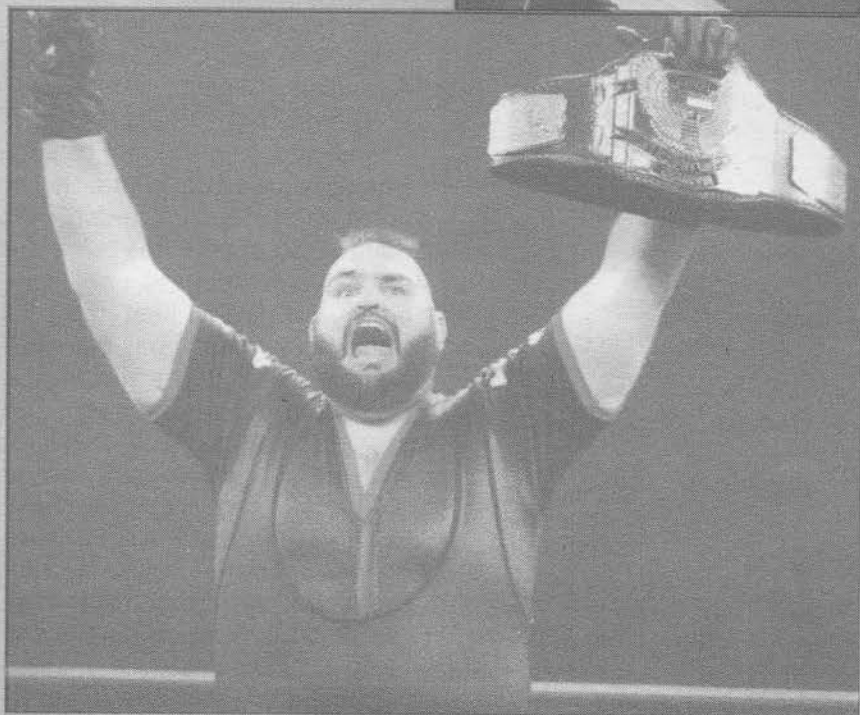
Keep saying it over and over and it still doesn't sound quite right. One Man Gang, WCW U.S. champion?! But the shock was not that he beat Kensuke Sasaki for the title. The shock was who helped him do it!



HOW KENSUKE SASAKI WAS DUPED OUT OF THE U.S. TITLE!



Photos by Susanna Frohman



Opposite Page, Top Left: Though he overpowered Sting with this clothesline, Kensuke Sasaki lost to him at Starrcade. The U.S. belt was not on the line. Opposite Page, Left: Sasaki showed off the U.S. belt before facing Gang, not knowing it would be the last time he'd do so. Top Right: Gang elbows Sasaki. Above: Meet your new U.S. champion!

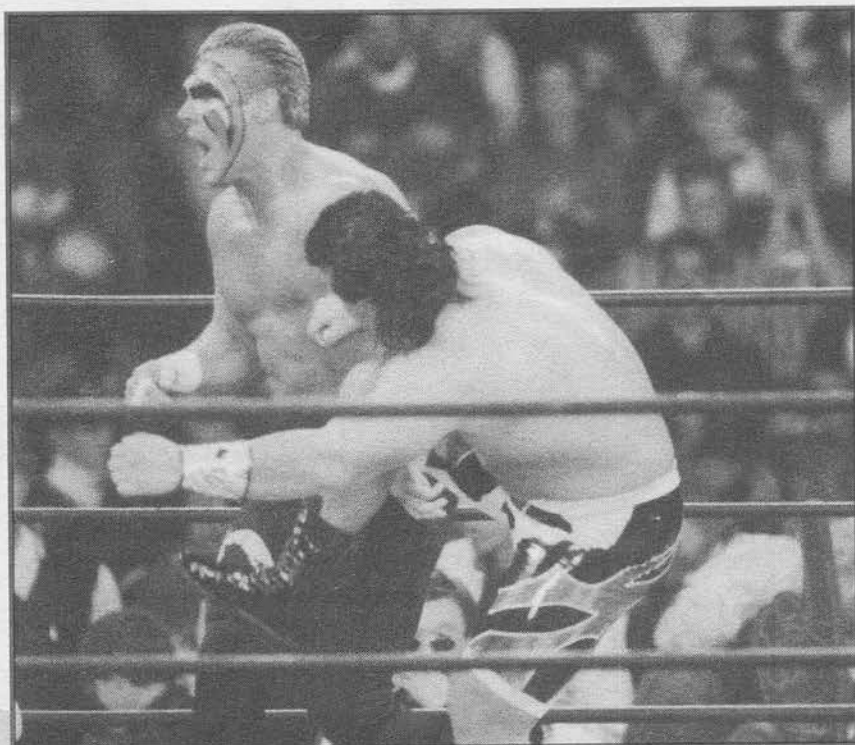
By Steve Anderson

MANY A GREAT wrestler has held the NWA/WCW U.S. heavyweight title. The prestigious belt has, at one time or another, been wrapped around the waists of Magnum T.A., Lex Luger, Nikita Koloff, Dusty Rhodes, Rick Steamboat, Steve Austin, Ric Flair, and Sting. Luger, Rhodes, Steamboat, Flair, and Sting all went on to win world titles after holding the U.S. belt.

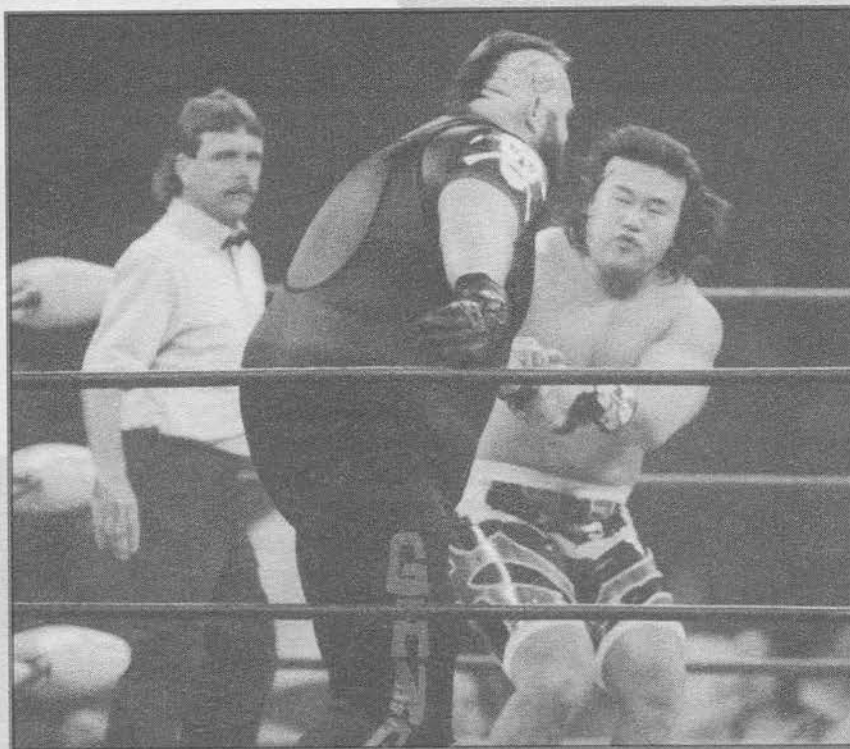
More recently, Kensuke Sasaki, a talented Japanese wrestler with a successful past and a promising future, proudly wore that belt. But he also recently lost it under what some would say were questionable circumstances. Nevertheless, the lineage of the U.S. heavyweight title continues.

Continues with none other than One Man Gang. A wrestler who a few months ago belonged on the "Where Are They Now?" page of *Inside Wrestling*. And the higher-ups at WCW may have greased the skids for this, some would say, mid-card wrestler to win the title.

Just a few days before Starrcade, WCW promoters were scrambling to add another title match to the pay-per-view event. TV champ Johnny B. Badd was already signed to a match. Harlem Heat was unavailable. And World champion Savage was already



Above: Sasaki put all he had into each kick against Sting at Starrcade; he wanted badly to win the match for his New Japan team. Below: Sasaki was already worn down when he took on Gang, and he didn't think was much at stake.



slated to defend his title. The nod went to Sasaki. He had held his title for the shortest length of time, plus he wasn't even a full-time WCW wrestler. Given Sasaki's

outsider status and his lack of championship seniority, WCW forced his hand. At the same time, they deemed the recently arrived Gang as the top contender.

"We wanted to give fans a match they hadn't seen before," said WCW attorney Nick Lambros. "Sasaki was a very dynamic champion, and One Man Gang earned his title shot."

Sasaki and his manager, Sonny Ono, immediately balked. Sasaki wanted to focus on his non-title World Cup match with Sting at Starrcade. But being the competitor he is, Sasaki agreed—on two conditions. First, the bout would not air on the pay-per-view. Second, it would be a non-title bout. The demands caught the powers-that-be at WCW off-guard. After all, the whole point was to add a title match to the event. Giving in to Sasaki would mean no televised match and no title bout. Insiders say that they resented the New Japan star trying to call the shots.

"Resented is a strong word," said WCW Commissioner Nick Bockwinkel, "but it's true that we don't like the wrestlers making the rules and putting stipulations on

the matches. It's not good policy."

On the morning of Starrcade, the parties met to close the deal. In attendance were Gang, Kevin Sullivan, members of the WCW championship committee, Sasaki, and several of his representatives. Sasaki reiterated his demands, but he did so in broken English. He hammered home his point about it being a *non-televvised* bout, but the *non-title* part came out confused and jumbled.

In the end, however, all parties signed the contract for the match. Sasaki thought his demands had been met. He never bothered to review the contract. His American counterparts did. Gang, Sullivan, and the WCW executives knew this would be a non-televvised *title* match. Signed, sealed, and delivered. Some would call it an honest mistake or a simple misunderstanding. Others might call it outright deception and duplicity.

Thirteen hours later, Starrcade was almost a part of history. Flair had his World belt back, and the WCW team had won the World Cup tournament. Sasaki, demoralized by his loss to Sting and his team's defeat in the series, re-entered the ring. As he looked across, he saw the smiling face of Gang. He would put forth his best effort. But the way he saw it, there was little at stake other than pride.

This was not a match that will go down as one of Sasaki's best. Still worn down from what had happened to him earlier on the card, he absorbed a pounding from the "fresh" One Man Gang. He was exhausted. And before Sasaki could mount a comeback, Gang stunned the Japanese star by pinning him.

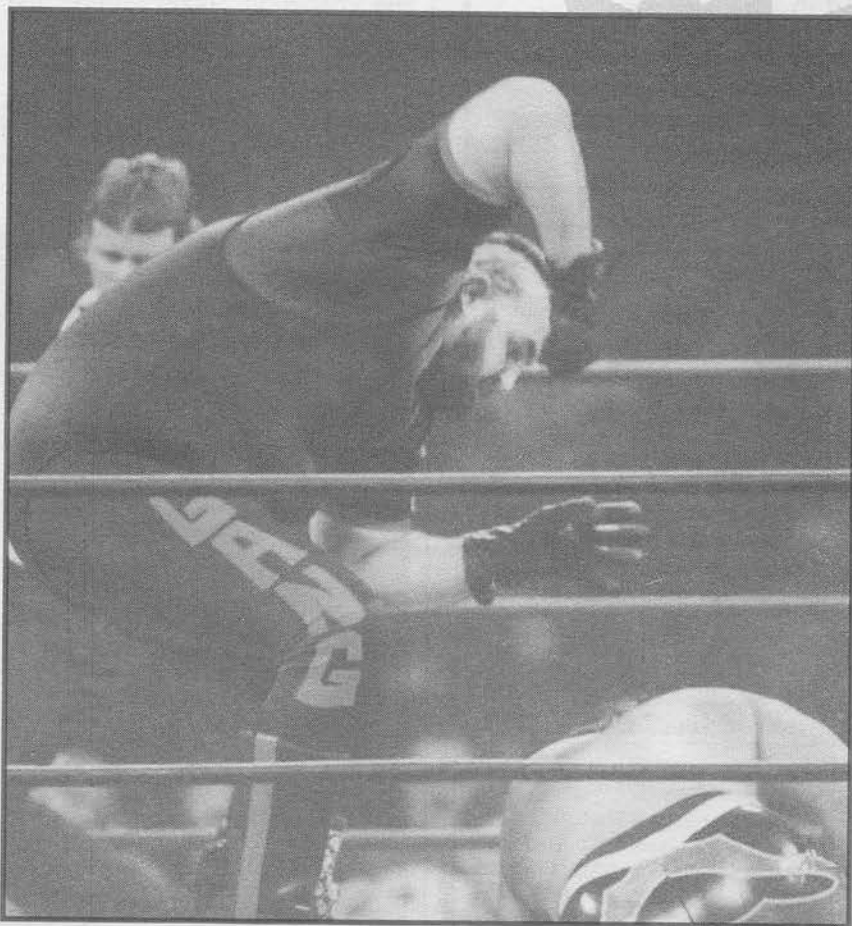
"It was a crowning moment for my Dungeon," said a gloating Sullivan. "No matter what Sasaki says or thinks, One Man Gang proved he was the better man."

Sasaki laid on the mat and

looked up at the dimming lights of the now-closing Nashville Municipal Auditorium. He could hear the shuffling of feet as the remaining fans headed for the exits. He stood up, ready to retrieve his U.S. belt and go home. But as he looked at his victorious opponent, he noticed something different. Something that One Man Gang was wearing now that he wasn't wearing when he came to the ring.

terms of the contract," Lambros said. "If there was an item on the contract that he had a problem with, he should have notified us before the match. It's too late now."

Was Sasaki a victim of a simple misunderstanding based on a language barrier? Or was he a victim of a conspiracy to strip the U.S. title from an outsider and hand it to a signed, full-time WCW



Gang never gave Sasaki any opportunity to get a breather during their Starrcade match. He knew what was at stake, and he knew he might never get another U.S. title match if he blew this one.

The U.S. heavyweight belt.

Sasaki suddenly felt a surge of adrenaline shooting through his veins. He protested to the referee. The now-former champion was so flustered that he couldn't crystallize his thoughts in any rational or understandable argument in English.

"To the best of my understanding, Mr. Sasaki was aware of the

wrestler? No one at WCW would comment further on the matter, except to say that it was a sanctioned, non-televvised U.S. title match with terms agreed to by both parties. Sasaki, realizing the futility of his arguments, begrudgingly accepted the decision.

And One Man Gang laughed all the way to the top of the WCW ratings. □

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YOUR LETTERS

(Continued from page 5)

GUNNS ARE SMOKIN'

After all The Smokin' Gunns accomplished in 1995, I can't believe that they still don't get much respect. People keep saying they're the best of a weak WWF crop. In 1995 alone, the Gunns beat teams like Owen Hart and Yokozuna, Razor Ramon and The Kid, The Bodydonnas, Men on a Mission, and Jerry Lawler and Isaac Yankem. Is it the Gunns' fault that The Road Warriors, Public Enemy, and The Nasty Boys aren't in the WWF?

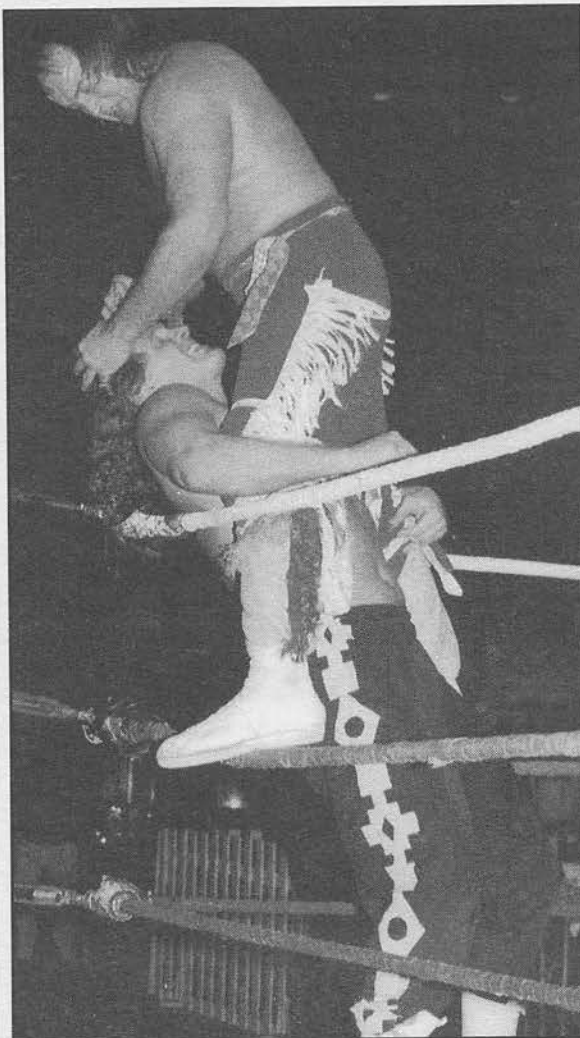
Even if they were, who's to say Billy and Bart wouldn't be able to beat them? The Gunns work together about as well as any team in wrestling today, and they have already won two WWF World tag team titles. Let's all start treating them like the champions that they are!

JACK BANNER
 Sacramento, CA

JUST GIVE IT UP!

I thought I had finally seen the last of The Rock 'n' Roll Express last year after Jim Cornette convinced Robert Gibson to turn rulebreaker in Smoky Mountain and Ricky Morton began feuding with him. But then Smoky Mountain folded, and Gibson and Ricky Morton did the unthinkable: They sat down, worked out their differences, and decided that they were better off teaming again. Now they're rulebreakers together in the USWA. The Rock 'n' Roll Express was by far my favorite tag team in the 1980s, but Gibson and Morton's day has passed. I think fans would rather remember them as the great team they were five or 10 years ago, not as the has-beens they are now. Please, guys, let's break up the Rock 'n' Rolls for good!

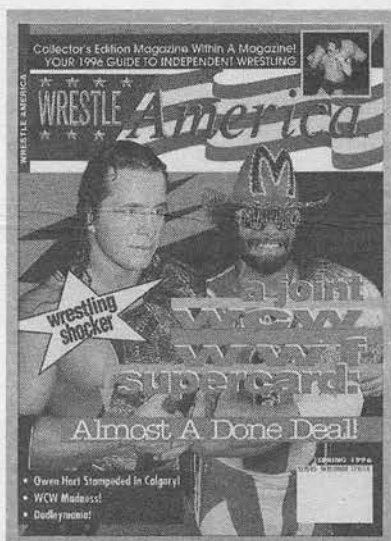
ANNIE HARPER
 Biloxi, MS □



Robert Gibson pounds on Tracey Smothers during a USWA tag team match. Reader Annie Harper wishes The Rock 'n' Roll Express, who are now USWA rulebreakers, would break up for good.

this month in...

WRESTLE America



Check out our special 28-page guide to independent wrestling federations all over North America! ... The WWF and WCW might be at each other's throats now, but we think a joint supercard is inevitable. And it could happen a lot sooner than you think! ... Find out why a trip to Calgary to honor his father wasn't the great experience **OWEN HART** expected it to be.

He learned a lesson in tough love ... Seems like just about everyone in WCW is going a little crazy these days. You won't want to miss our psychological overview of WCW's top stars!

All this—and much more!—
in the Spring 1996 issue of
Wrestle America

NOW ON SALE!

PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED



Some strange things have gone on in the WWF over the years, and some strange characters have come and gone. **GOLDUST** may be the strangest, and we think he is getting away with too much on WWF telecasts. Something must be done, because this time, the WWF has gone too far! ... **RIC FLAIR**, believe it or not, is demanding an apology—from the world! He is angry that so many people told him before Starrcade '95 that he was washed up and should retire. Maybe he has a point! ... Find out all about **JEFF JARRETT'S** search for a new road crew!

All this—and much more!—
in the May 1996 issue of
Pro Wrestling Illustrated

NOW ON SALE!

WHAT'S HAPPENING

(Continued from page 7)

great catch for the PWF's **Madd Maxxine** ... Mexican stars **Konnan** and **Vampiro Canadiense** are now starring in a Mexican daytime soap opera ... **Mabel** still holds the World Wrestling Council Universal title, despite several bloody battles with ex-champ **Carlos Colon** and top challenger **Abdullah the Butcher**.

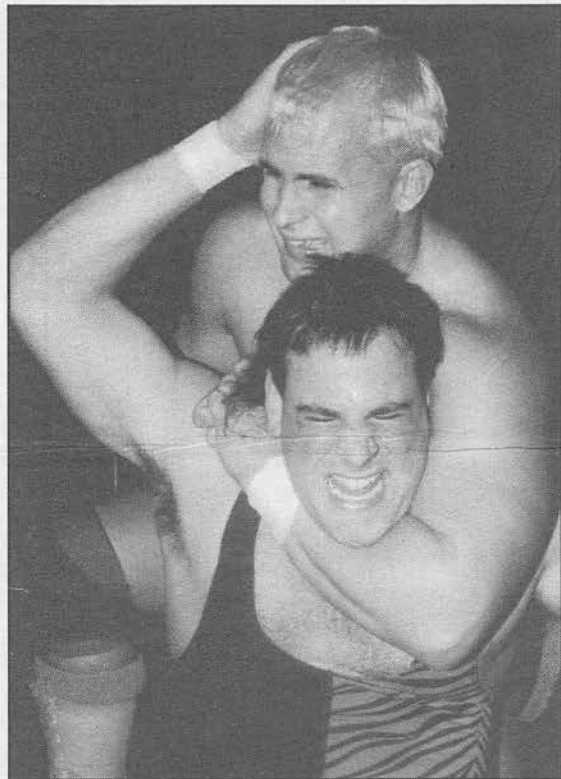
Terry Austin is the proud holder of the Pro Wrestling Federation heavyweight title, but he took a strange route to the top of the federation. He pinned **Italian Stallion** for the belt on January 16, but PWF Commissioner **Jim Tucker** returned the belt to Stallion two nights later after he saw a videotape replay of the match and noticed that **George South** had interfered. But the same night Stallion got the belt back, Austin beat him again, once again after South interfered. And I thought **Gorilla Monsoon** was inconsistent.

Lady Satan has won the USWA women's title from **Miss Texas**. "I intend to put women's wrestling back on the map," she said. "Too many women, like Miss Texas and

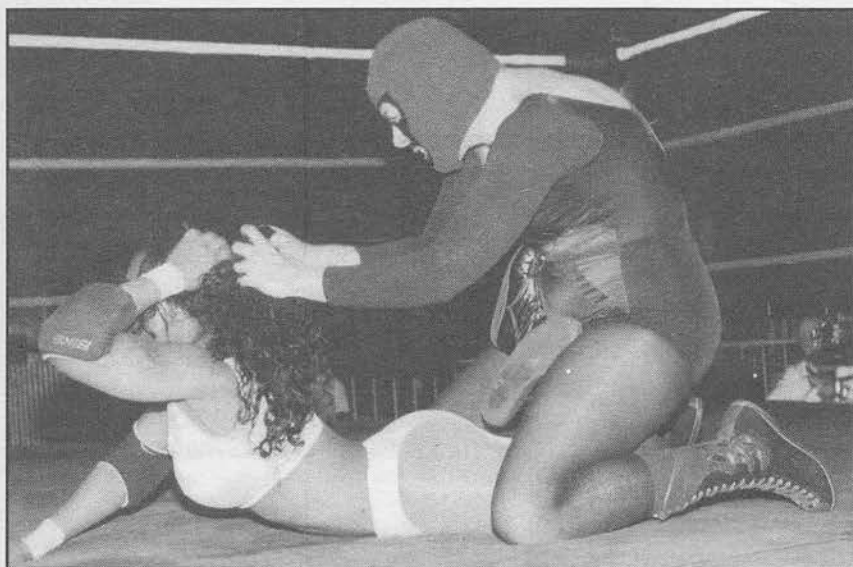
Madusa, have ruined the good name of women's wrestling." By the way, I hope Madusa and **Sherri Martel** take their WCW feud into the ring soon.

Ivan Putski substituted for **Jake Roberts** on a recent Texas CWA card. Jake's wife had gone into false labor that night, forcing him to cancel his appearance ... Due to some disagreements in Peach State Wrestling, **Bob Armstrong** told me he might get into the ring *against* his sons **Scott** and **Steve**. "I may just have to whip their hides," he said. "I don't like the way they've been acting lately." Scott and Steve are hated by Peach State fans for recent sneak-attacks on **Ray Lloyd** and **R.D. Swain**.

Public Enemy has looked good



Chris "Skip" Candido applies a rear chinlock on Ace Darling during an independent card. Skip may soon be stripped of the Pennsylvania Championship Wrestling U.S. title. He and Sunny don't seem concerned.



That's Lady Satan yanking on the hair of Miss Texas. The masked woman won the USWA women's title from Texas and is having nasty things to say about certain other women wrestlers.

during their time in WCW. But the competition in the tag ranks is really tough right now. I don't see them getting the belts anytime soon. ... **Alex Wright** informed me that he has learned a great deal from wrestling Ric Flair several times these last few months. "It's like going through three years of wrestling school in a crash course," he said.

Pennsylvania Championship Wrestling officials are considering stripping **Chris "Skip" Candido** of the PCW U.S. title due to the fact that he rarely defends the belt. "It's their loss if they are stupid enough to do it, but we defend *our* belt only when we feel like it!" **Sunny**, Skip's manager, said. "They'd never have such a classy champion again."

That's what's happening. See you at the matches! □

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

Wrestling historians, rejoice! Some of the back issues in this ad have not been offered for sale for more than a decade—but a recent transfer of warehouse inventory from New York to Pennsylvania uncovered a small supply of these classic publications! Obviously, supplies are extremely limited, so all magazines will be sold on a first-come, first-served basis only. Prices quoted are based on the rarity of the issue and the number of available copies. For speediest service, use VISA or MasterCard or make payment by money order or certified check. Please don't send cash! Don't miss out on this once-in-a-lifetime chance to own a memorable piece of wrestling history! Once they're gone, they'll never be offered for sale again—so order today!

WRESTLING REVUE

Published between 1959 and 1964, *Wrestling Revue* is acknowledged as one of the finest series of wrestling magazines ever produced. These beautiful editions, all edited and published by Stanley Weston (founder of *Pro Wrestling Illustrated*, *The Wrestler*, and *Inside Wrestling*, among so many other titles) set a standard for all wrestling magazines that followed, and are available now for the first time in many years!

Fall 1961 Edouard Carpentier challenges Floyd Patterson, Bruiser vs. Cowboy Bob Ellis, The Zebra Kid, killer holds, action at The Kiel, Nick Bockwinkel vs. Dr. X, and full-color action of the Bastiens vs. Shires & Nelson. \$25

December 1961 An extensive Buddy Rogers interview, Bobo Brazil, Fred Blassie, Pepper Gomez, the Torres brothers, Whipper Watson, "Sailor" Art Thomas, Ricki Starr, plus a full-color centerfold of Mark Lewin & Don Curtis. \$35

February 1962 Dick Beyer, Mitsuo Arakawa, Edouard Carpentier vs. Lou Thesz, Angelo Poffo, a five-girl battle royal, Don and Jackie Fargo, Billy Zabyszko, Larry Chene, plus a full-color centerfold of Guy & Joe Brunetti. \$30

April 1962 Wilbur Snyder, Luis Martinez, Madison Square Garden closeup, Yulie Brynner, Billy Wolfe, Don Leo Jonathan vs. Pat O'Connor, closeup on midgets, plus a full-color centerfold of Bearcat Wright. \$30

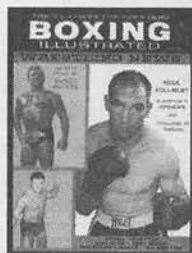
June 1962 Eddie Graham, Verne Gagne, wrestlers vs. boxers, Dory Dixon, Yukon Eric, Tony Lanza, Lorraine Johnson vs. Kay Noble, Skull Murphy & Brute Bernard, The Crusher, plus a full-color centerfold of Red Bastien. \$25

December 1963 The Destroyer, "Maniac" Mark Lewin, Paul Diamond, Ernie Ladd, Judy Grable, Bill Watts, Pat O'Connor, Don Duffy, The Scufflin' Hillbillies, plus a full-color centerfold of Lou Thesz. \$35

February 1964 Edouard Carpentier vs. Killer Kowalski, Florida wrestling, Mad Dog Vachon, Fabulous Moolah, Fritz Von Erich, Rene Goulet, Cyclops, plus a full-color centerfold of Bruno Sammartino. \$35



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In November 1958, Stanley Weston launched *Boxing Illustrated/Wrestling News*, an innovative concept in sports magazines. Each issue's content consisted of approximately 60 percent boxing and 40 percent wrestling, resulting in the most complete magazine for ring aficionados the world has ever known.

May 1959 Boxing: Ray Robinson, James Jeffries, Rube Vargas, Willie Pep, Joey Maxim, Denny Moyer. **Wrestling:** Gene Stanlee, Larry Hamilton, Happy Humphrey, "Cowboy" Bob Ellis. \$25

June 1959 Boxing: Gene Fullmer, Jack Britton, Gustav Scholz, Mauro Vazquez, Rocky Graziano. **Wrestling:** Buddy Rogers, Don Leo Jonathan, Hard Boiled Haggerty, Omaya Kato. \$35

September 1959 Boxing: Carmen Basilio, the perfect kayo, Tiger Flowers, Joe Brown, Paolo Rosi. **Wrestling:** Edouard Carpentier, Ricki Starr, Enrique Torres. \$25

October 1962 Boxing: Special edition previewing the Floyd Patterson vs. Sonny Liston bout! **Wrestling:** "Handsome" Johnny Barend, Andre Drapp, "Sailor" Art Thomas, five pages of results. \$30

October 1963 Boxing: Cassius Clay, Joe Lynch, Frankie Narvaez, Tommy Loughran. **Wrestling:** Crusher vs. Verne Gagne, Tony Manous, The Dirty Daltons, results. \$25

February 1964 Boxing: Sonny Liston, Joey Archer, 1963 in review, Cassius Clay. **Wrestling:** Bruno Sammartino vs. Gorilla Monsoon, Emile Dupre, Bruiser vs. Bob Ellis, results. \$30

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- ☐ December 1961
- ☐ February 1962
- ☐ April 1962
- ☐ June 1962
- ☐ December 1963
- ☐ February 1964

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NO HOLDS BARRED

(Continued from page 8)

standing. Of course, the WWF has never placed a high priority on that.

Then again, it pretends to. In its embarrassing "Billionaire Ted's 'Rasslin' War Room" skits, "Billionaire Ted" asks his assistants why the WWF is still ahead of WCW, even though he has spent millions of dollars on acquiring former WWF talent. "Quality over image" is the gist of the explanation given by his fictional sidekick. Highlights are shown of Bret Hart and Shawn Michaels. "Billionaire Ted" asks "The Huckster" and "The Nacho Man" what they can do. The aging "Nacho Man" and "Huckster" respond by posing.

What can the WWF do? Diesel's finger is one answer.

The WWF bills itself as the home of the "New Generation." But WCW outbid WWF for the services of several top young independent stars, including Eddy Guerrero, Sabu, Chris Benoit, Dean Malenko, and, most recently, Public Enemy. Among the participants in the Royal Rumble were Jake Roberts, Bob Backlund, Jerry Lawler, and Dory Funk Jr., whose combined age must be close to 200.

Talk about hypocrisy: Only a few years ago, the WWF was singing the praises of Hulk Hogan

and Randy Savage. Now Vince McMahon is calling Bret Hart "the best there ever was and the best there ever will be." He has obviously seen the movie *The Natural* a few too many times. In any event, we can't trust McMahon's judgment. He used to call Hulk

whose likeness now appears in the WWF as the fictional "Scheme Gene."

As for "The Huckster" vs. "Nacho Man" match, how dare the WWF waste our time with its petty little battle?

This match reminds me of something an editor once said to me. I came back from a major wrestling event complaining that the promoters didn't supply the media with press notes or food.

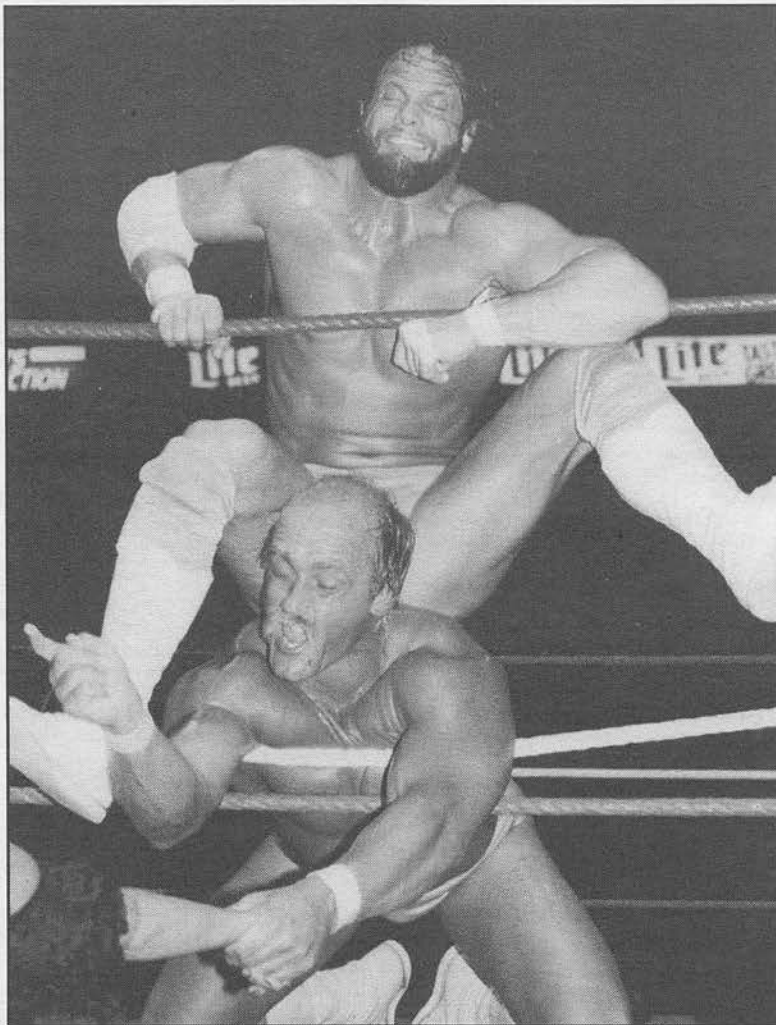
"We were all starving for five hours," I said. "I'm going to write about this in my next column."

I never did because my editor explained to me that the average Joe doesn't care about media mistreatment.

"People are going to read that column and say, 'Why didn't he buy himself something to eat if he was so hungry?'" my editor said.

Along the same lines, people don't care about the WWF's troubles with WCW.

But there are some things the public does care about, like indecent behavior by wrestlers and quality matches. If the WWF really cares about wrestling, it will scratch "The Nacho Man" vs. "Huckster" match and issue a stern warning to its wrestlers: Behave! □



Randy Savage and Hulk Hogan had some titanic battles in the WWF, and McMahon regularly sang their praises when they were in the WWF. But now that both are working for WCW, he sees them as over-the-hill nobodies.

Hogan the greatest wrestler of all-time, and he called him that when Bret Hart was in the federation.

Suddenly, Hogan and Savage are in WCW, so they're over the hill.

The WWF still hasn't found an analyst and update interviewer to replace "Mean" Gene Okerund,

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CORRESPONDENTS REPORTS

(Continued from page 14)

out to determine which one was stronger when they attempted to square off in an arm-wrestling match.

Johnson responded to Smith's challenge to such a contest by retreating to the dressing room to get a table. When he came back, he threw the table into the ring, thereby cracking it. As the "Bulldog" taunted the crowd, a referee tried unsuccessfully to fix the table. While Ahmed was distracted, Smith attacked him from behind and smashed his head into the table.

Johnson was stunned for a few seconds, but came back with his own series of punches. About a minute later, he used his "Pearl River Plunge" on Smith, but before he could get the pin, Jeff Jarrett interfered, giving Johnson the win by disqualification.

In other bouts: Fatu pinned Bob Backlund ... Skip & Zip beat Barry Horowitz & Marty Jannetty ... Henry Godwinn pinned Rad Radford ... Goldust beat Bob Holly ... WWF World tag team champs The Smokin' Gunns beat Jerry Lawler & Isaac Yankem ... Savio Vega beat Hunter Hearst Helmsley by disqualification ... Diesel & Razor Ramon beat Jeff Jarrett & Sid Vicious ... Bret Hart & The Undertaker beat Owen Hart & Yokozuna.

Philadelphia, PA (Correspondent—Joe Vincent): If young Stevie Richards was frightened by the prospect of facing Sabu in front of a sellout crowd at the ECW Arena, he sure didn't show it. In fact, he had Sabu off-balance for a good portion of their fast-paced match.

Sabu was quick to grab a chair,

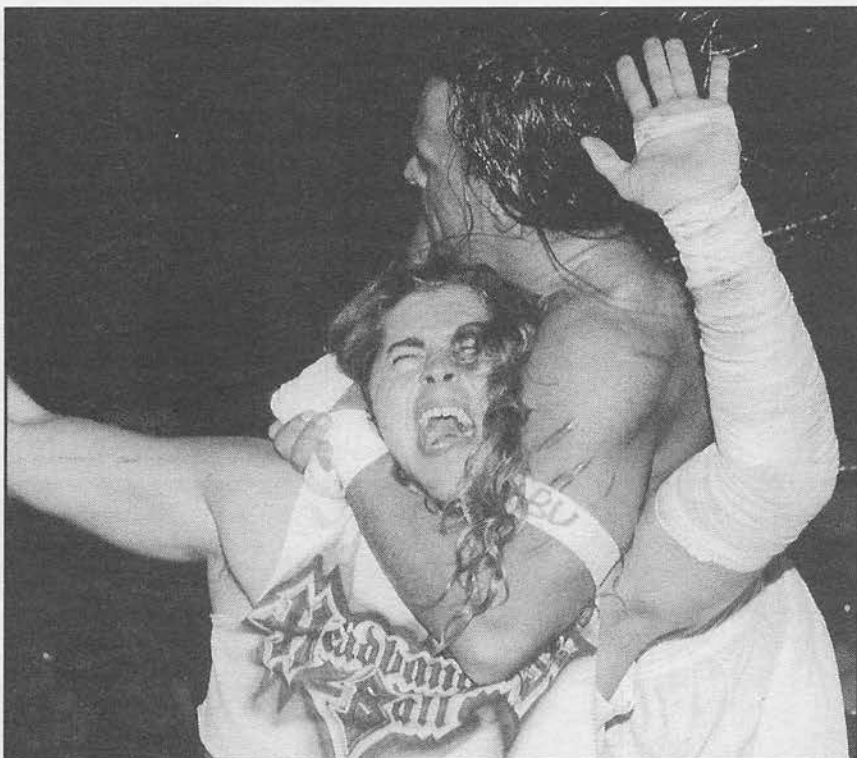
and he slammed both Richards and The Blue Meanie, who was seconding Richards. The blow only temporarily stunned Richards, though. A few moments later, he power-bombed Sabu and got a two-count. The match continued at a similar pace for the next few minutes, as neither man could sustain any momentum for very long. Sabu hit both Richards and Meanie with a chair a few more times, but then Richards got another near-fall after executing another power bomb and following it up with a flying fistdrop.

Finally, Sabu had enough of Meanie and took him down with a "Frankensteiner" outside the ring. After placing Richards on top of a wooden table, Sabu splashed him twice and broke the table. Still, though, Richards refused to give in. He got two more near-falls after

catching Sabu in a small package, then dropping him to the mat with a superkick, a move that caused Sabu to start bleeding from the mouth.

Perhaps it was the sight of his own blood that got Sabu riled. Just minutes later, he used an Arabian facebuster on Richards and pinned him. He celebrated the win by breaking another table with a moonsault!

In other bouts: 911 & Rey Mysterio Jr. beat The Eliminators ... Rob Van Dam defeated Axl Rotten ... 2 Cold Scorpio defeated ECW TV champion Mikey Whipwreck to win the belt ... Taz beat Hack Myers ... Bubba Ray Dudley beat Jim Del Ray ... The Bad Crew wrestled J.T. Smith & The Broad Street Bully to a no-contest ... ECW heavyweight champ The Sandman beat Konnan ... Public Enemy beat The Gangstas. □



Stevie Richards tries to work his way out of Sabu's reverse chinlock. Though Richards came close to upsetting Sabu in a recent bout, he lost after falling victim to an Arabian facebuster.

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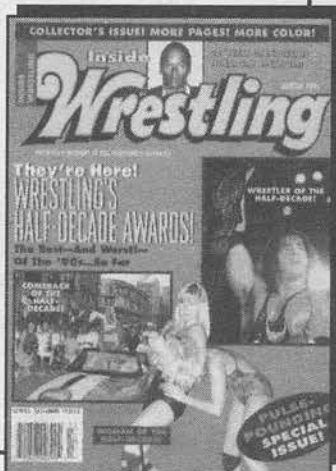
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WINTER 1994



WINTER 1994

JANUARY 1986 WRESTLER includes a dynamic four-page full-color section celebrating the 10 greatest wrestlers of the *Wrestler* years. Featured in color: Bruno Sammartino, Hulk Hogan, Ric Flair, and Dusty Rhodes.

MARCH 1993 WRESTLER features a full-color 12-page section, "1992: The Year In Pictures," that details all the most important events, both in and out of the ring, of that remarkable year in the mat sport.

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JUNE 1994 WRESTLER is an 88-page spectacular featuring 20 pages of "The stuff all fans should know"—the best wrestling quiz ever! What's your wrestling IQ? Find out with this issue! Features four full-color pinups!

SEPTEMBER 1994 WRESTLER 88 pages of excitement—including the lively and candid "WWF Midyear Report," a review of the WWF through the first half of the year! Includes four color pinups!

WINTER 1994 WRESTLER includes the must-read bonus section, "Wrestling From A To Z"—an alphabetical array of wrestling trends and turmoil! Four full-color pinups complete this sensational 88-page package!

MARCH 1990 INSIDE WRESTLING looks back at the decade of the '80s with a dazzling eight-page full-color section and a year-by-year review of the most significant events in the sport. Must reading for all fans!

JANUARY 1993 INSIDE WRESTLING presents a stunning 12-page bonus full-color section covering the WWF's SummerSlam '92 extravaganza and Clash of the Champions XX.

JANUARY 1994 INSIDE WRESTLING offers the most extensive coverage of SummerSlam '93 and Fall Brawl anywhere: seven pages of analysis plus two pages of full-color highlights from each card!

APRIL 1994 INSIDE WRESTLING includes the first-ever *Inside Wrestling* computer tournament! You won't believe who wins—or how! This 88-page issue's four-page color section includes an action centerfold—from the tournament?!

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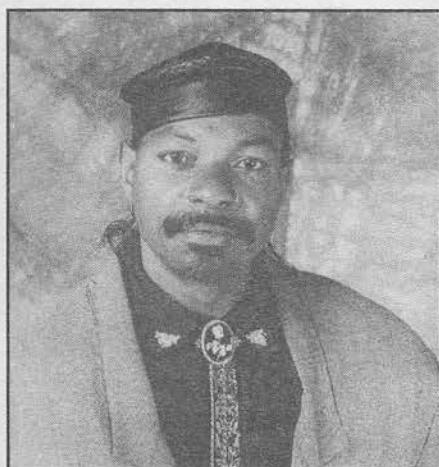
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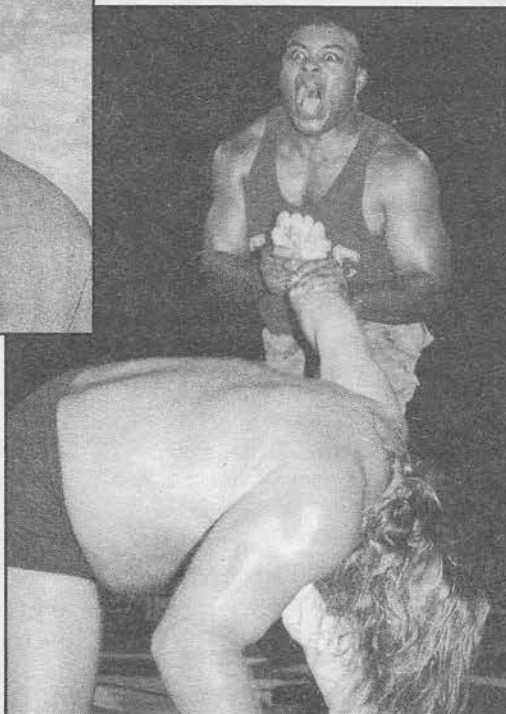
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YOU ASKED US

(Continued from page 16)



Teddy Long (left) is looking forward to managing Sgt. Craig Pittman (below). He says Pittman needs to be more patient and more in control of his emotions if he's to win a title in WCW.



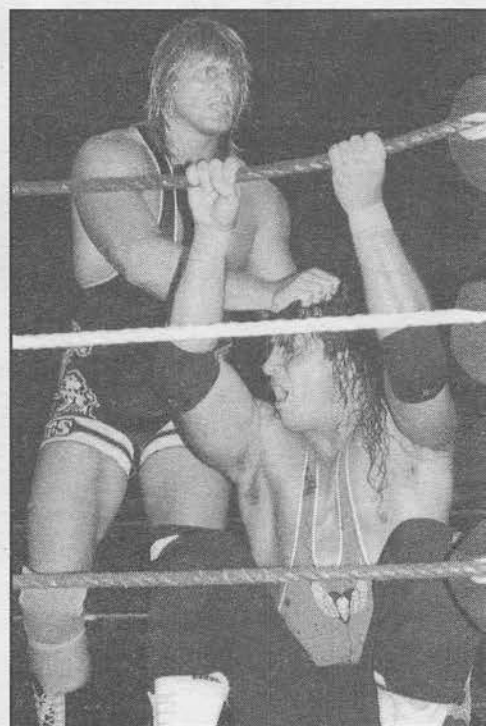
and Tully put it together, but we showed 'em all wrong. I could debate all day with someone about which Horsemen were the best, but let me say this: Neither Ric Flair nor I would ever put a group of Horsemen together if we didn't think it measured up to past Horsemen. I think these Horsemen would match up pretty good with any of the Horsemen of the past. The reason I'm having such a good time with the Horsemen right now is that no one thought me Ric, Pillman, and Benoit were gonna succeed. They counted us out before we even got started. That was stupid!"

Q: "This question is for Teddy Long: You've managed good wrestlers before, but what makes you think you can make a champion out of Sgt. Craig Pittman? He hasn't accomplished much so far in WCW." —Jeffrey Cantor, Red Lake, MN

A: "In Craig Pittman, Jeffrey," replied Long, "I saw a confused man and an angry man. When he came to WCW, he wanted to be a champion right away. He let his emotions and his temper

get the best of him. It's like he was mad at the world. The first time I saw him in the ring, I knew he had a chance to be something special. He has a great amateur background, you know. I'm just working with him and trying to get him to be more patient. I'm trying to tone down that killer instinct of his. Sometimes he wants to go for the kill too early in a match. Sometimes when you do that and get too angry, you don't think straight. And when you're not thinking straight, you usually lose. I will mold Sgt. Pittman into a champion. He'll be a champion everyone in WCW can be proud of."

Q: "I have a question for Stu Hart: Now that the feud between your sons Bret and Owen has cooled down a bit, do you think there's



We haven't seen any one-on-one Owen Hart-Bret Hart battles in a while. Stu Hart thinks there's a decent chance his two sons will reconcile fairly soon.

any chance they will reconcile?" —Brad Grossman, Cornwall, Ontario

A: "Because Bret and Owen are both my sons," said Stu, "I have to think the answer is yes. Owen isn't obsessed with beating Bret like he used to be. I talked to him a little bit when he was up here in Calgary for a special card in December, and I think maybe he's on the road back. He probably wouldn't admit it, but I see him calming down a little now. In time, I think he'll realize that all this feuding with Bret was just nonsense. Who cares which one of them is better?! If Owen just gets away from that snake Jim Cornette, he'll wise up. And if he's big enough to admit to all of us that he was wrong to start this stuff with Bret, we'll welcome him back into the family." □

BACK ISSUES OF

THE Wrestler

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July 1986/Stories include: King Kong Bundy, Koloff vs. Graham, Ric Flair.

December 1986/Stories include: Flair, Hogan, Bockwinkel, Gilbert, Nikita.

January 1987/Stories include: Heenan, Garvins, DiBiase, Borne & Sawyer.

May 1988/Stories include: Horsemen, Hogan, Flair, Fantastics, DiBiase.

February 1990/Stories include: Sting-Luger, Gordy, Martel, Hogan-Brown.

April 1990/Stories include: Hogan, Luger, Woman, Piper-Heenan, Travis.

June 1990/Stories include: Hogan, Rockers, Koloffs, Horsemen, Flair-Luger.

July 1990/Stories include: Poffo, Dusty-Savage, Luger-Flair, Doom, Blanchard.

September 1990/Stories include: Ultimate, Haynes, Luger, Doom, Tugboat.

October 1990/Stories include: Hogan-Earthquake, Ultimate, Flair, Rich.

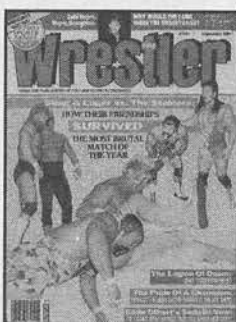
November 1990/Stories include: Luger & Sting, Beefcake, Race, Steiners.

May 1991/Stories include: Hogan-Slaughter, Flair, Eaton, Sheik-Bobo.

June 1991/Stories include: Hogan, Nastys, Sting, Flair, Cactus Jack.

July 1991/Stories include: Flair-Fujinami, Nastys, Steiners, Savage.

August 1991/Stories include: Slaughter, Luger-Nikita, Hennig, Poffo.



September 1991/Stories include: Steiners vs. Sting & Luger, LOD, Cactus.

November 1991/Stories include: Luger, Steamboat, Piper, Global.

January 1992/Stories include: LOD, Badd, Hughes, Roberts, Gossett.

February 1992/Stories include: Flair, Simmons, Santana, Backlund.

May 1992/Stories include: Flair, Anderson & Eaton, Piper, Rhodes, USWA.

June 1992/Stories include: Flair-Hogan-Justice, Gilbert, Warrior, Vegas.

August 1992/Stories include: Warrior, Bunkhouse, Undertaker-Roberts, Sting.

October 1992/Stories include: Bulldog & Warrior, Lee, Martel-Tatanka, Austin.

November 1992/Stories include: Crush, Reed, Hennig, Sting, Rogers.

April 1993/Stories include: What's in/out, Ramon, Steamboat, Patriot, Tatanka.

June 1993/Stories include: Sting-Vader, Doink & Christopher, Steiners, Lawler.

July 1993/Stories include: Smith-Vader, Ramon, Rhodes, Tatanka, Bravo murder.

November 1993/Stories include: Rude-Flair, Hogan, Luger, Jannetty, Bodies.

December 1993/Stories include: Luger, Sting & Flair, Fytch, Luna, Austin.

January 1994/Stories include: Hogan, Rude-Flair, Bagwell & Scorpio, Cornette.



February 1994/Stories include: Vicious & Am, Yokozuna, Vader-Cactus, steroids.

April 1994/Stories include: Hogan, Savage-Crush, Flair, Blayze, Adams, Boss.

May 1994/Stories include: Royal Rumble, Hulk minus bulk, Boss, Douglas-Sherri.

July 1994/Stories include: Flair-Hogan, DiBiase, Crockett, Douglas, WWF.

August 1994/Stories include: Cactus-Vader, MOM, Hart & Yokozuna, Badd.

October 1994/Stories include: Undertaker, Cactus, Scorpio-Sabu, Funk, Sheik.

November 1994/Stories include: Hogan, Owen, Bret, Badd, Lawler.

December 1994/Stories include: Hogan, Luger, Vicious, Austin, Bomb.

January 1995/Stories include: Holiday gifts, DiBiase, Badd, Backlund, PG-13.

February 1995/Stories include: Hogan, Steiners, Undertaker, Sabu, Honky Tonk.

April 1995/Stories include: Harlem Heat, Lawler-Cornette, Beefcake, What If...?

May 1995/Stories include: Sting-Savage, Jarrett, Flair, Douglas-Blanchard.

July 1995/Stories include: Hogan, Jannetty, Pillman, LT, Dundee.

August 1995/Stories include: Diesel, LT, Hogan, powerful people, Gargoyles.

October 1995/Stories include: Backlund, Steiners, Austin & Pillman, Miss Texas.

November 1995/Stories include: Flair-Savage, Mabel, Jarrett-Ramon, Renegade.

Winter 1995/Stories include: Sting-Hogan, Steiners, Yankem, Bodies, Arn.

January 1996/Stories include: Hogan, Douglas, anniversary review of 30 years.

February 1996/Stories include: Hart, Luger, WCW, Cactus, Horowitz.

THE WRESTLER

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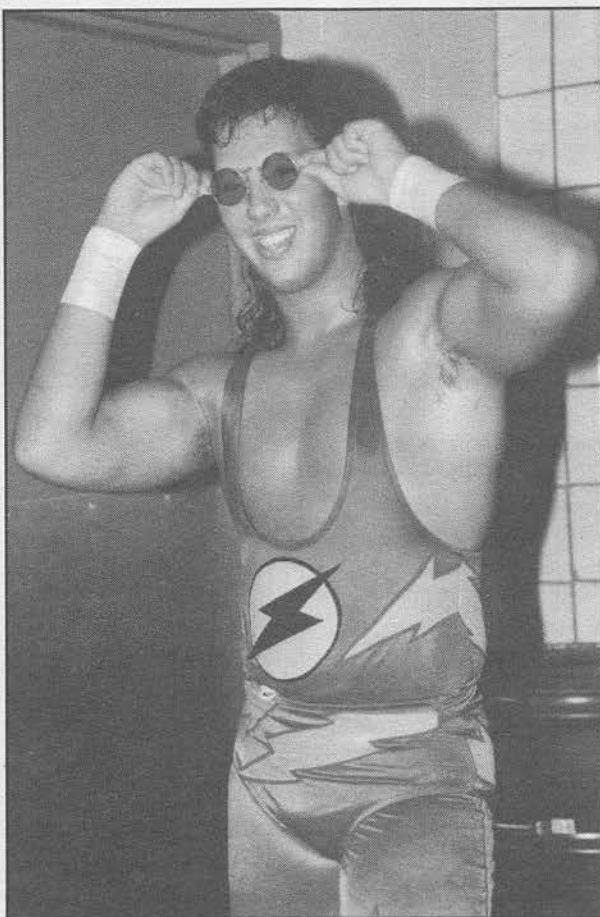
THE KID

HE IS KNOWN as an upset specialist, but this time *The Kid* may have started a feud that he has no business being in. His interference in the Intercontinental title match between Razor Ramon and Goldust at the Royal Rumble led directly to Goldust's victory for the I-C belt. Now he and Ramon figure to be doing battle for many months to come.

The 6'2", 212-pound Minneapolis native spent most of the first few years of his pro career competing in the Minnesota-based Pro Wrestling America, where he twice won the light heavyweight title and also held the tag team and TV titles. Kid also captured the Global Wrestling Federation junior heavyweight title twice in 1991 and gained some valuable experience in Japan before getting his big WWF break.

And what a break it was! After doing little to impress anyone in the WWF during the first few weeks of his career there, Kid pulled off a stunning upset of Ramon, pinning him 1-2-3 on a live broadcast of *WWF Monday Night Raw* on May 17, 1993. From that point on, he became known as *The 1-2-3 Kid*.

His good fortune in the ring contin-



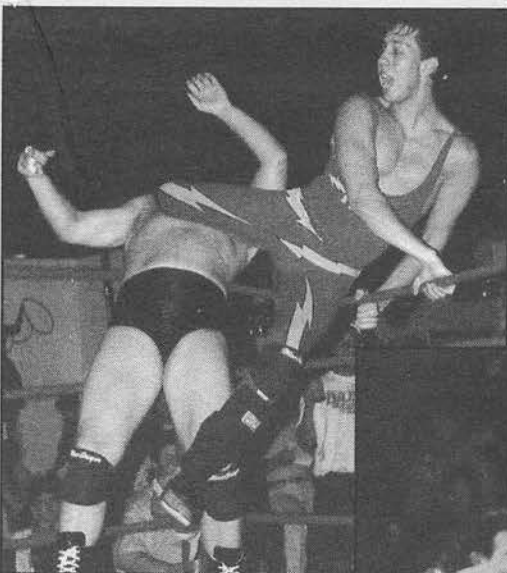
ued for a while, as he racked up victories over veterans such as Terry Taylor, Ted DiBiase, and Rick Martel, but he began to struggle after suffering an injury in a match with Marty Jannetty in the summer of 1993. He eventually decided that he and Jannetty would make a good team, and they upset *The Quebecers* for the WWF tag

team title in January 1994. *The Quebecers*, however, won the belts back just a week later.

Kid advanced to the semifinals of the 1994 King of the Ring after upsetting Jeff Jarrett in the first round, but he then lost to eventual tournament champion Owen Hart. After having more problems in singles action, Kid tried teaming with both Bob Holly and Aldo Montoya, and he and Holly pulled off a big upset when they won the WWF tag title in a tournament at the 1995 Royal Rumble. Their reign was ended the next night by *The Smokin' Gunns*.

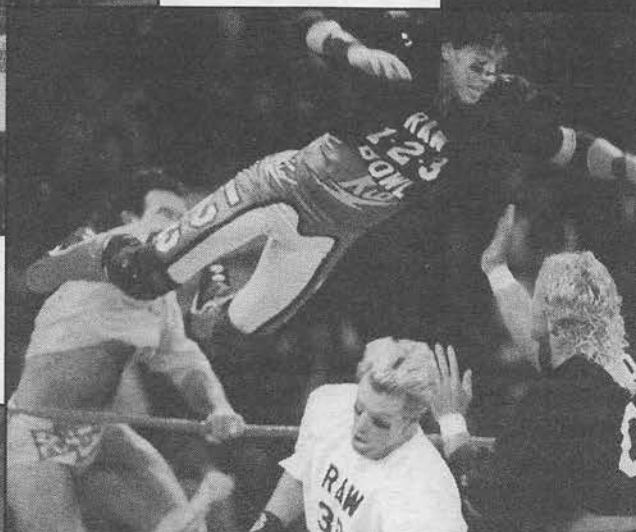
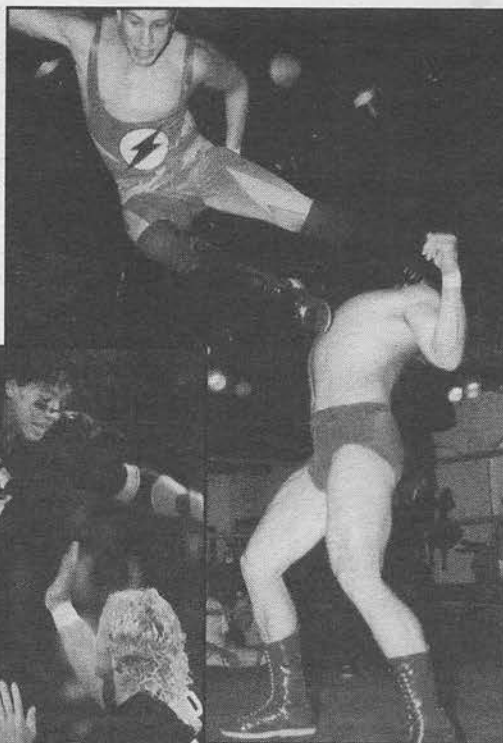
After spending a good part of 1995 helping Razor in his feud with Jarrett, Kid began struggling in matches with Hakushi and *The Roadie*. Problems between Kid and Ramon began at *In Your House III* when Kid inadvertently cost Razor a match against Dean Douglas. They finally split when Kid, as guest referee, helped "Psycho" Sid Vicious beat Ramon.

Kid is now an integral part of DiBiase's Corporation, and in addition to feuding with Ramon, he and Sid are pursuing the WWF tag title. Like him or not, Kid deserves a chance to shine in our "Spotlight."



October 1991: The spinning savate kick has always been a favorite weapon of Kid, even when he was just getting started in the PWA. The victim here is Ric Havoc.

August 1992: How many wrestlers can get this kind of height on a simple dropkick? The Kid is one of the few. He used his aerial skills to win four titles in the PWA.

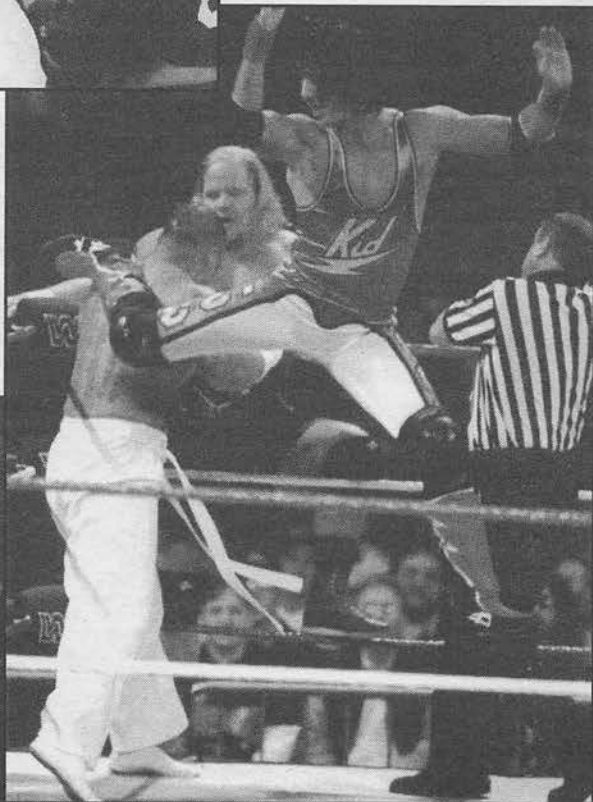
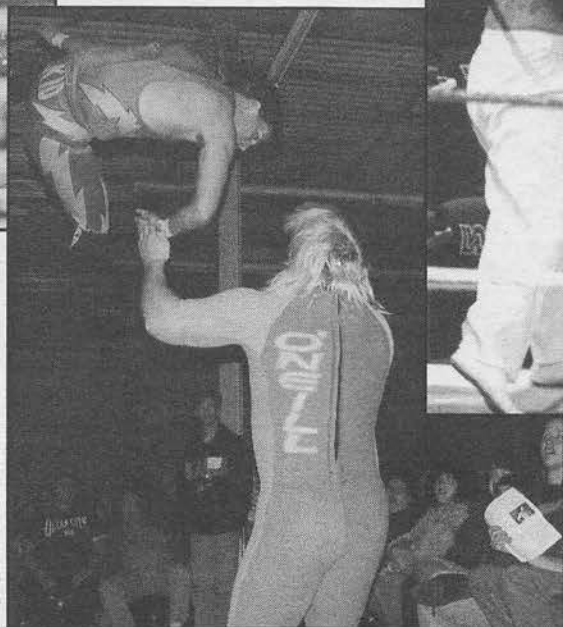


December 1995: Though Kid's partnership with "Psycho" Sid Vicious has shown some promise recently, this Kid dive off the top rope at the inaugural "Raw Bowl" didn't reach its intended target.



August 1993: The Kid lost his first big WWF pay-per-view match—to Irwin R. Schyster at SummerSlam '93—but in the process he gained a lot of respect from fans and rivals alike.

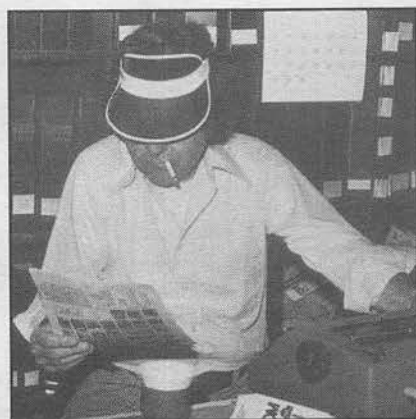
March 1993: Just weeks before he signed with the WWF, Kid (then The Lightning Kid) was dazzling fans—and opponents such as Ray Odyssey—with his out-of-the-ring acrobatics.



November 1995: Shortly after joining Ted DiBiase's Million-Dollar Corporation, Kid kicked his way to victory in an eight-man tag team match at the Survivor Series.

MATT BROCK'S LOOKING BACK

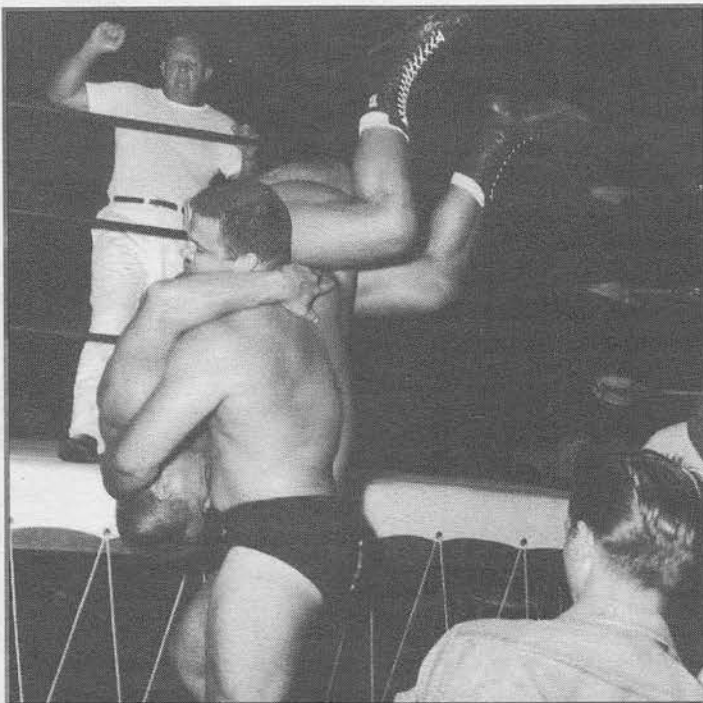
June 21, 1963
Bill Watts vs.
Pepper Gomez



ERIC BISCHOFF tells us WCW "is where the big boys play!" about every two minutes on every broadcast of *WCW Monday Nitro*. Vince McMahon tries to entertain us with inane "Billionaire Ted's 'Ras-slin' War Room" skits. Smoky Mountain stars invade the USWA and vice versa. Everyone in ECW bashes everyone in WCW and the WWF.

Seems like everyone in wrestling went nuts over the last year. Everyone hates everyone else and wants to make everyone else's life miserable. Wonderful world we live in, ain't it? Well there was a time

not too long ago when wrestlers from different areas or different federations used to settle their differences like men, face-to-face.



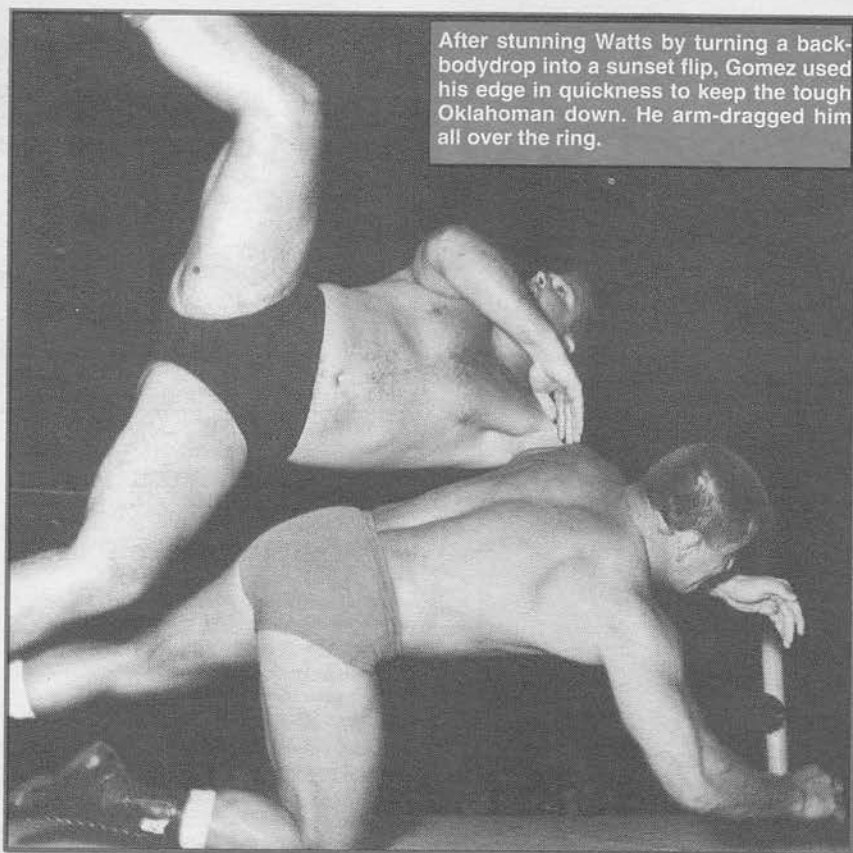
Bill Watts thoroughly dominated the first part of the match with Gomez. He even bodyslammed him a few times outside the ring. But then he got a bit careless.

A lot of you probably remember Bill Watts as a former WCW executive. Guy who did his best to ruin a damn fine federation a few

years back. I remember Bill Watts the wrestler. "Cowboy" Bill. "Bruiser" Bill. The kind of wrestler you could split a bottle of scotch with after a card and know that he'd give you the straight story. Always told you what was on his mind. Watts was a rulebreaker, but he was the kind of guy I respected. Tough Oklahoman.

But folks in Texas never cared for him. Most folks in Texas don't like much about folks from Oklahoma, and the feeling is usually mutual.

You can imagine the reaction in Houston when Watts won the Texas title. Took it from Art Thomas in May of 1963. It just burned those people when they realized that an invader from



After stunning Watts by turning a back-bodydrop into a sunset flip, Gomez used his edge in quickness to keep the tough Oklahoman down. He arm-dragged him all over the ring.

Oklahoma was taking their belt home.

Pepper Gomez aimed to put an end to that. Though he wasn't from Texas, he had the utmost respect for the fans there, and they loved him. He had the power any good brawler needs, but he could also go to the air when he needed to. There wasn't a lot of hype for this match, no talk about the invader from Oklahoma taking on the hero of the Texas fans. It was just too tough men facing each other. That was enough to sell this match.

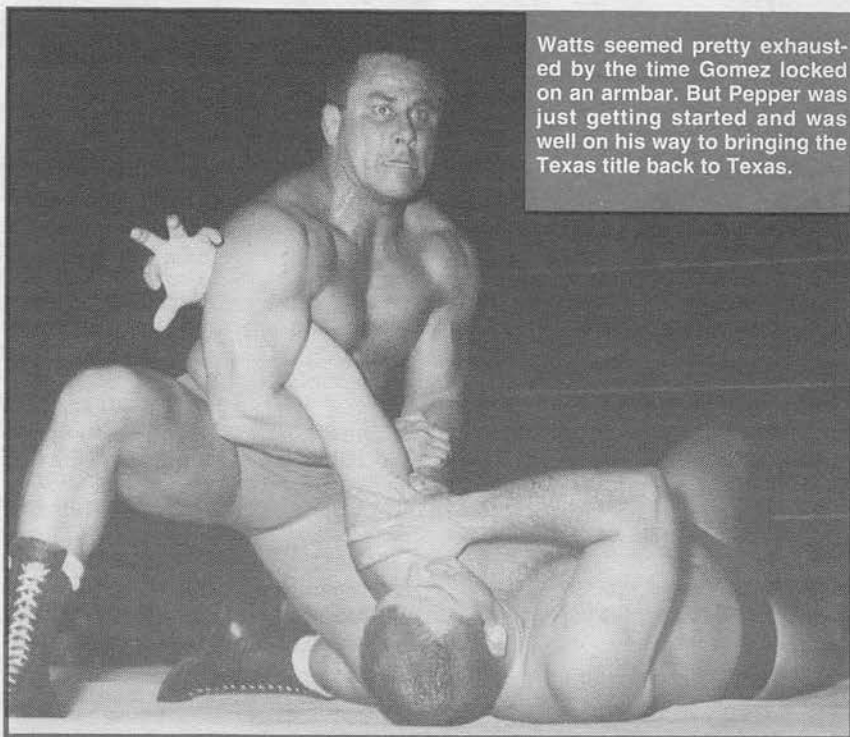
Watts entered the ring first and was booed. Didn't faze him. "I didn't get into wrestling to make friends or enemies, Brock," he once said. "The way crowds respond to me is irrelevant. I'm a wrestler because I like to win!"

For the first six or seven minutes of the Gomez match, it looked like Watts would have no problem winning. He showed everyone how he earned the nickname "Bruiser." He whipped Gomez from corner to

corner, post to post. Clotheslines, bodyslams, kicks to the stomach—Watts delivered them all. Even took Gomez to the arena floor and bodyslammed him there two times.

Then Watts got careless. Started slowing down. Gave Gomez time to recover between moves. Didn't go for the pin when it looked like he had Gomez beat. Gomez suddenly turned a back-bodydrop into a sunset flip and got a two-count. Watts never really recovered. Gomez found a burst of energy and started arm-dragging his foe all over the ring. Then he wore down Watts' left arm with an armbar. "Bruiser" Bill got in a few more shots in the next few minutes, but in the end, Gomez was just too quick for him. He got the pinfall and the Texas belt after flooring Watts with a flying body-press from the second rope. As Gomez celebrated, Watts quietly returned to the locker room.

Caught up with him a few hours later at a little bar outside Houston. We shared a few drinks. "I underestimated Gomez tonight," Watts said. "I didn't deserve to win. But I'll never make that mistake again, Brock." I left the bar that night with even more respect for Watts than I had had before. Win or lose, he has always been a stand-up guy. □

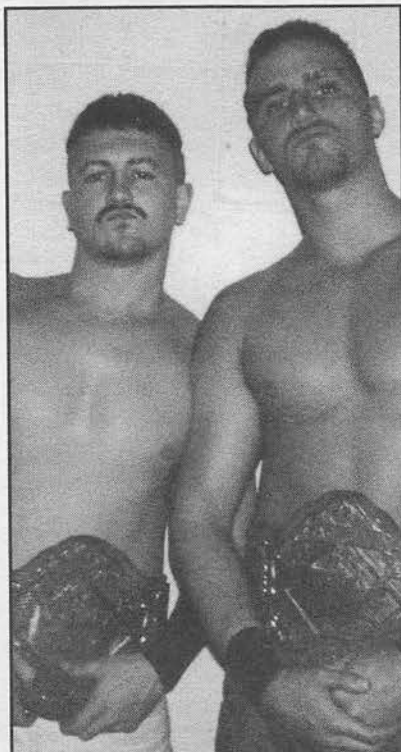


Watts seemed pretty exhausted by the time Gomez locked on an armbar. But Pepper was just getting started and was well on his way to bringing the Texas title back to Texas.

Wrestler

TOP 10

- 1 BRET HART**
235, Calgary, Alberta
(1) WWF World champion
- 2 RANDY SAVAGE**
237, Sarasota, FL
(7) WCW World champion
- 3 THE UNDERTAKER**
328, parts unknown
(4) No. 2 contender: WWF World title
- 4 THE GIANT**
430, parts unknown
(-) No. 3 contender: WCW World title
- 5 DIESEL**
356, Las Vegas, NV
(6) No. 4 contender: WWF World title
- 6 RIC FLAIR**
243, Minneapolis, MN
(2) No. 2 contender: WCW World title
- 7 SHAWN MICHAELS**
234, San Antonio, TX
(-) No. 3 contender: WWF World title
- 8 HULK HOGAN**
275, Venice Beach, CA
(3) No. 5 contender: WCW World title
- 9 KONNAN**
237, Mexico City, Mexico
(-) U.S. heavyweight champion
- 10 GOLDUST**
254, Austin, TX
(-) WWF Intercontinental champion



PG-13

TAG TEAMS

- 1 LEX LUGER & STING**
Combined weight: 525 pounds
(-) WCW World tag team champions
- 2 THE SMOKIN' GUNNS**
Combined weight: 465 pounds
(1) WWF World tag team champions
- 3 SKIP & ZIP**
Combined weight: 446 pounds
(3) No. 1 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 4 THE ROAD WARRIORS**
Combined weight: 560 pounds
(-) No. 1 contenders: WCW World tag title
- 5 HARLEM HEAT**
Combined weight: 550 pounds
(2) No. 2 contenders: WCW World tag title
- 6 PG-13**
Combined weight: 471 pounds
(9) USWA tag team champions
- 7 THE ELIMINATORS**
Combined weight: 459 pounds
(-) ECW tag team champions
- 8 MARCUS BAGWELL & SCOTTY RIGGS**
Combined weight: 464 pounds
(10) No. 3 contenders: WCW World tag title
- 9 PUBLIC ENEMY**
Combined weight: 583 pounds
(6) No. 4 contenders: WCW World tag title
- 10 J. J. ARMSTRONG & TRACEY SMOTHERS**
Combined weight: 467 pounds
(8) No. 1 contenders: USWA tag title

WCW

World Champion:
RANDY SAVAGE

(4) 237, Sarasota, FL

- 1-KONNAN**
(-) 237, Mexico City, Mexico
- 2-RIC FLAIR**
(C) 243, Minneapolis, MN
- 3-THE GIANT**
(6) 430, parts unknown
- 4-ONE MAN GANG**
(1) 468, Chicago, IL
- 5-HULK HOGAN**
(2) 275, Venice Beach, CA
- 6-STING**
(3) 260, Venice Beach, CA
- 7-LEX LUGER**
(7) 265, Chicago, IL
- 8-JOHNNY B. BADD**
(5) 235, Macon, GA
- 9-ARN ANDERSON**
(-) 249, Minneapolis, MN
- 10-BRIAN PILLMAN**
(-) 226, Cincinnati, OH

WWF

World Champion:
BRET HART

(C) 235, Calgary, Alberta

- 1-GOLDUST**
(7) 254, Austin, TX
- 2-THE UNDERTAKER**
(2) 328, parts unknown
- 3-SHAWN MICHAELS**
(-) 234, San Antonio, TX
- 4-DIESEL**
(3) 356, Las Vegas, NV
- 5-AHMED JOHNSON**
(5) 255, Pearl River, MS
- 6-TATANKA**
(-) 250, Pembroke, NC
- 7-JEFF JARRETT**
(6) 230, Nashville, TN
- 8-RAZOR RAMON**
(1) 290, Miami, FL
- 9-SAVIO VEGA**
(10) 260, Vega Alta, Puerto Rico
- 10-DAVEY BOY SMITH**
(4) 245, Leeds, England

USWA

USWA Champion:
JEFF JARRETT

(C) 230, Nashville, TN

- 1-TOMMY RICH**
(8) 248, Hendersonville, TN
- 2-BRIAN CHRISTOPHER**
(2) 230, Memphis, TN
- 3-TRACEY SMOTHERS**
(6) 227, Atlanta, GA
- 4-J. J. ARMSTRONG**
(4) 240, Marietta, GA
- 5-KOKO B. WARE**
(5) 229, Union City, TN
- 6-DOUG GILBERT**
(9) 241, Lexington, TN
- 7-TEX SLAZINGER**
(1) 253, Austin, TX
- 8-SPELLBINDER**
(-) 273, parts unknown
- 9-TOMMY RICH**
(8) 248, Hendersonville, TN
- 10-KAMALA**
(-) 345, Uganda

ECW

ECW Champion:
RAVEN

(10) 235, Short Hills, NJ

- 1-2 COLD SCORPIO**
(1) 222, Denver, CO
- 2-THE SANDMAN**
(C) 244, Philadelphia, PA
- 3-TOMMY DREAMER**
(3) 245, Yonkers, NY
- 4-TAZ**
(7) 221, Massapequa, NY
- 5-SABU**
(5) 220, Bombay
- 6-CACTUS JACK**
(-) 277, Truth or Consequences, NM
- 7-MIKEY WHIPWRECK**
(2) 187, New York, NY
- 8-STEVIE RICHARDS**
(6) 227, Philadelphia, PA
- 9-REY MISTERIO JR.**
(8) 140, San Diego, CA
- 10-MR. HUGHES**
(-) 308, Kansas City, KS

OFFICIAL RATINGS

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board. Most Popular and Most Hated ratings are based on nationwide telephone and arena surveys of wrestling fans and on the volume and character of mail that comes to our offices. All other ratings are based on the official current positions of challengers to the top title in each category; certain titleholders receive an automatic spot in the ratings. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue, while (C) indicates the wrestler was champion in that category last issue.

MOST POPULAR

- 1 SHAWN MICHAELS**
234, San Antonio, TX
Last issue: No. 1 Most Popular
- 2 STING**
260, Venice Beach, CA
Last issue: No. 2 Most Popular
- 3 BRET HART**
235, Calgary, Alberta
Last issue: No. 4 Most Popular
- 4 HULK HOGAN**
275, Venice Beach, CA
Last issue: No. 9 Most Popular
- 5 RAZOR RAMON**
290, Miami, FL
Last issue: No. 5 Most Popular
- 6 RANDY SAVAGE**
237, Sarasota, FL
Last issue: No. 6 Most Popular
- 7 THE UNDERTAKER**
328, parts unknown
Last issue: No. 3 Most Popular
- 8 AHMED JOHNSON**
255, Pearl River, MS
Last issue: No. 7 Most Popular
- 9 DIESEL**
356, Las Vegas, NV
Last issue: No. 10 Most Popular
- 10 JOHNNY B. BADD**
235, Macon, GA
Last issue: No. 8 Most Popular

MOST HATED

- 1 BIG VAN VADER**
450, Denver, CO
Last issue: unrated
- 2 RIC FLAIR**
243, Minneapolis, MN
Last issue: No. 8 Most Hated
- 3 GOLDUST**
254, Austin, TX
Last issue: No. 2 Most Hated
- 4 THE GIANT**
430, parts unknown
Last issue: No. 1 Most Hated
- 5 BRIAN PILLMAN**
226, Cincinnati, OH
Last issue: unrated
- 6 THE KID**
212, Minneapolis, MN
Last issue: No. 3 Most Hated
- 7 JEFF JARRETT**
230, Nashville, TN
Last issue: No. 5 Most Hated
- 8 JERRY LAWLER**
234, Memphis, TN
Last issue: No. 9 Most Hated
- 9 KEVIN SULLIVAN**
252, Boston, MA
Last issue: No. 4 Most Hated
- 10 LEX LUGER**
265, Chicago, IL
Last issue: No. 6 Most Hated

For period ended February 7, 1996

CUMULATIVE RATINGS

These ratings are based on the past 10 issues of this magazine. We have examined our ratings for each of these issues in our Top 10 and Tag Team categories only, and assigned each position a point value: 10 points for a first-place rating, nine for second place, and so on. The point values for all wrestlers in the past 10 issues have been compiled, with a possible maximum of 100 points. Each issue we'll present the top five finishers in each category. While our regular ratings reflect the past month, these cumulative ratings give an indication of wider trends in the sport.

SINGLES

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| 1—DIESEL..... | 74 points |
| 2—HULK HOGAN..... | 65 points |
| 3—STING..... | 63 points |
| 4—BRET HART..... | 61 points |
| 5—RANDY SAVAGE..... | 46 points |

TAG TEAMS

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| 1—HARLEM HEAT..... | 76 points |
| 2—OWEN HART & YOKOZUNA..... | 76 points |
| 3—THE SMOKIN' GUNNS..... | 72 points |
| 4—THE NASTY BOYS..... | 36 points |
| 5—PG-13..... | 35 points |

NEW JAPAN

IWGP Champion:

NOBUHIKO TAKADA

(C) 231, Yokohama, Japan

- 1—JUSHIN LIGER**
(2) 206, Hiroshima, Japan
- 2—THE GREAT MUTA**
(1) 245, Tokyo, Japan
- 3—KENSUKE SASAKI**
(4) 233, Tokyo, Japan
- 4—KOJI KANEMOTO**
(7) 205, Tokyo, Japan
- 5—RIKI CHOSHU**
(6) 246, Yamaguchi, Japan
- 6—ANTONIO INOKI**
(3) 240, Tokyo, Japan
- 7—BIG VAN VADER**
(8) 450, Denver, CO
- 8—SHINYA HASHIMOTO**
(5) 287, Gisu, Japan
- 9—HIROSHI HASE**
(10) 225, Tokyo, Japan
- 10—HIRYOSHI TENZAN**
(9) 270, Tokyo, Japan

ALL-JAPAN

Triple Crown Champion:

MITSU HARU MISAWA

(C) 228, Saitama, Japan

- 1—TOSHI AKI KAWADA**
(1) 245, Tizhigi, Japan
- 2—KENTA KOBASHI**
(3) 261, Tokyo, Japan
- 3—AKIRA TAUE**
(2) 265, Tokyo, Japan
- 4—STAN HANSEN**
(7) 322, Borger, TX
- 5—JOHNNY ACE**
(4) 250, San Bernadino, CA
- 6—THE PATRIOT**
(6) 251, Columbia, SC
- 7—GARY ALBRIGHT**
(-) 343, Billings, MT
- 8—YOSHINARI OGAWA**
(5) 202, Fichigi, Japan
- 9—DAN KROFFAT**
(9) 232, Montreal, Quebec
- 10—SHOHEI BABA**
(8) 283, Niigata, Japan

AAA: AAA Champion—Perro Aguayo; 1—Cien Caras; 2—Pscosis; 3—Rey Misterio Jr.; 4—Jerry Estrada; 5—La Parka; 6—Heavy Metal; 7—Octagon; 8—Winners; 9—El Hijo Del Santo; 10—Zibernetico.

ACW: ACW Champion—T. Rantula; 1—Mr. Hughes; 2—Johnny Gunn; 3—Virgil; 4—Johnny Graham; 5—Rick Martel; 6—Tito Santana; 7—Mikey Whipwreck; 8—Glen Osbourne; 9—Ubas; 10—Lord Zoltan.

MTW: MTW Champion—Title Vacant; 1—Bruiser Bedlam; 2—D-Lo Brown; 3—Machine Gun Kelly; 4—Rock Stevens; 5—Bobo Brazil Jr.; 6—Chris Carter; 7—Johnny Paradise; 8—J.T. Lightning; 9—Brad Armstrong; 10—Ray Roberts.

PCW: PCW Champion—Akita Kaos; 1—Skip; 2—Ray Odyssey; 3—Reckless Youth; 4—Ubas; 5—D-Lo Brown; 6—Mark Mest; 7—The Midnight Rocker; 8—Boo Bradley; 9—Johnny Graham; 10—Jimmy Deo.

PWA: PWA Champion—The Hater; 1—Horace the Psychopath; 2—J.B. Trask; 3—Dan Jessor; 4—Lenny Lane; 5—The Mangler; 6—Charlie Norris; 7—Kamikaze Kid; 8—Blacktop Bully; 9—Nailz; 10—Jesse Hennig.

PWF: PWF Champion—Terry Austin; 1—Italian Stallion; 2—Flaming Youth; 3—George South; 4—Austin Steele; 5—Star Ryder; 6—Masked Mania; 7—Russian Assassin II; 8—Cruel Connection II; 9—Tyronne Knox; 10—Chris Hamrick.

RATINGS ANALYSIS

Every month, this column will tell fans how we go about rating over 200 wrestlers in 20 different categories. It is a behind-the-scenes look at the most important—and respected—ratings system in the sport. This column is vital reading for all wrestling fans

A tale of many tag teams. Are you sick of hearing about the wars between the WWF and WCW? Well, one phase of the promotional wars that is clearly being dominated by WCW is in the tag team division. The WCW tag team roster got much stronger in January when that federation signed **Public Enemy** and finally convinced **The Road Warriors** to reunite. Those two teams, in addition to **Lex Luger** and **Sting** (who won the World tag team title on January 22), **Harlem Heat**, **The Nasty Boys**, **Bobby Eaton** and **Lord Steven Regal**, **Marcus Bagwell** and **Scotty Riggs**, and the young combination called **Men at Work** give WCW a deep, talented roster.

On the other hand, all indications were that the WWF's tag team situation was only getting worse early in 1996. **The Smokin' Gunns** maintained a stranglehold on the World tag team title, but you had to wonder: Were they simply champions by default?

Their most serious challenges were coming from former champs **Owen Hart** and **Yokozuna**, but lately, those two have seemed more interested in their solo careers and may not remain in our tag team ratings much longer. **The Kid** and **"Psycho" Sid Vicious** looked like a formidable team for a while, but they started to fizzle after losing to **Razor Ramon** and **Marty Jannetty** at In Your House V in December. Kid and Sid look like they're headed downward in a hurry.

Other teams to get title shots this winter included **Jerry Lawler** and **Dr. Isaac Yankem**, **Rad Radford** and **Skip**, and **Owen Hart** and **Davey Boy Smith**. **Jeff Jarrett** tried his luck teaming with both Sid and **Hunter Hearst Helmsley** early in 1996; neither of those teams looked particularly strong or cohesive in the ring.

The only team that looks like it might have some long-term potential is the new **Bodydonnas**. That's right, **Skip** and **Zip**, who is better known to most as **Tom Prichard** of **The Heavenly Bodies**. They have come close to beating the Gunns in a few title matches, including a wild Royal Rumble bout.

Still, we wonder if Skip will ever be the same wrestler that

he was before he suffered all those embarrassing losses to **Barry Horowitz** last summer and fall. **Skip** and **Zip** are near the top of our tag team ratings this month, but they have a ways to go before they can think about reaching the number-one spot. The point of all this is that the WWF is in desperate need of more quality tag teams ... and fast!

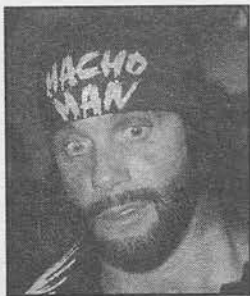
Top 10 talk. A few additions to our overall top 10 this month. Like him or not, **Goldust** makes it by virtue of his victory over **Razor Ramon** for the WWF Intercontinental title at the Royal Rumble. He needed help from **The Kid**, but one fact remains: He did find a way to win the WWF's second most prestigious championship.

Randy Savage climbs higher in the top 10, thanks to his victory over **Ric Flair** for his second WCW World title. Savage's days in the top 10 could be numbered, though. He has yet to find a way to beat **Lex Luger** in WCW and has been slowed by injuries lately.

What can one match do for you? A lot if it's the WWF Royal Rumble and you win it. **Shawn Michaels** had been out of action for more than two months before he came back and won the 1996 Rumble in spectacular fashion. That victory alone earned him a spot in the overall top 10. And, unlike Savage, we expect Michaels to remain in the top 10 for a while. Look for him to "fulfill his destiny," as he puts it, and finally win the WWF World title at **WrestleMania XII**.

One guy who you might think deserves a spot in the top 10 is **Big Van Vader**. Sure, he did look absolutely dominant in his first few WWF appearances. But we have left his name out of the WWF top 10, too, for as of press time, Vader was still suspended because of his disgraceful attack on WWF President **Gorilla Monsoon** on January 22. He will, however, have a spot in our Most Hated rankings.

That's all for now! If you have any thoughts or questions relating to our ratings or any of the issues we've raised here, please let us know. Write to: "Ratings Analysis," c/o THE WRESTLER, Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. □



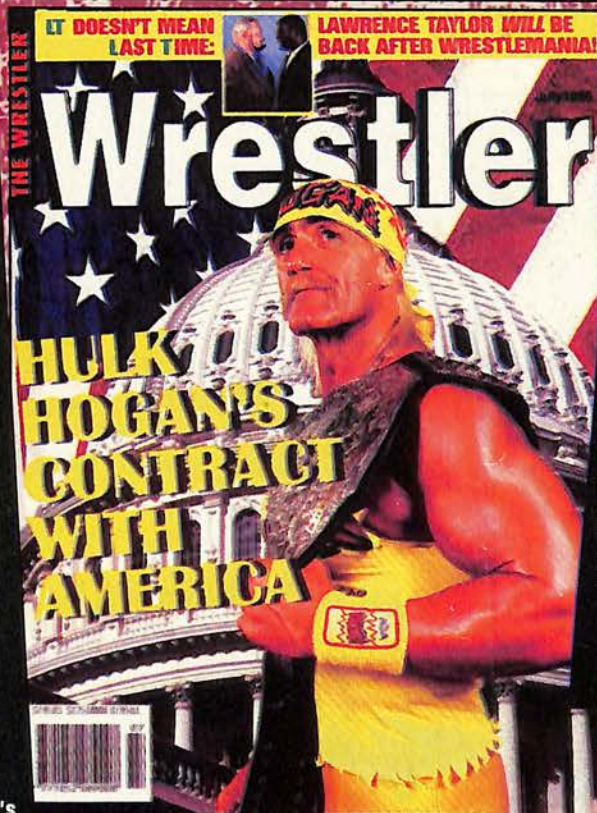
Randy Savage



Big Van Vader

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